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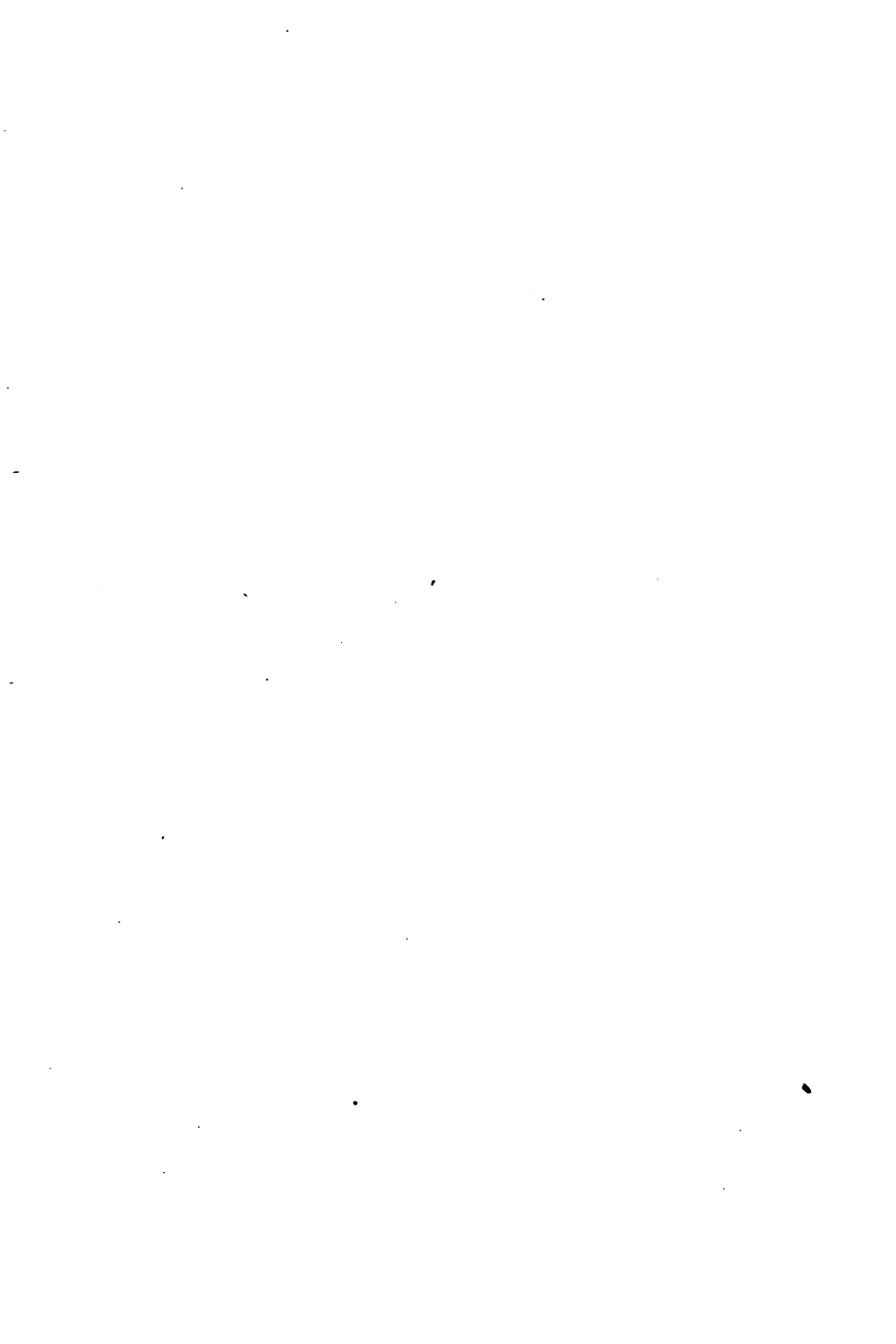
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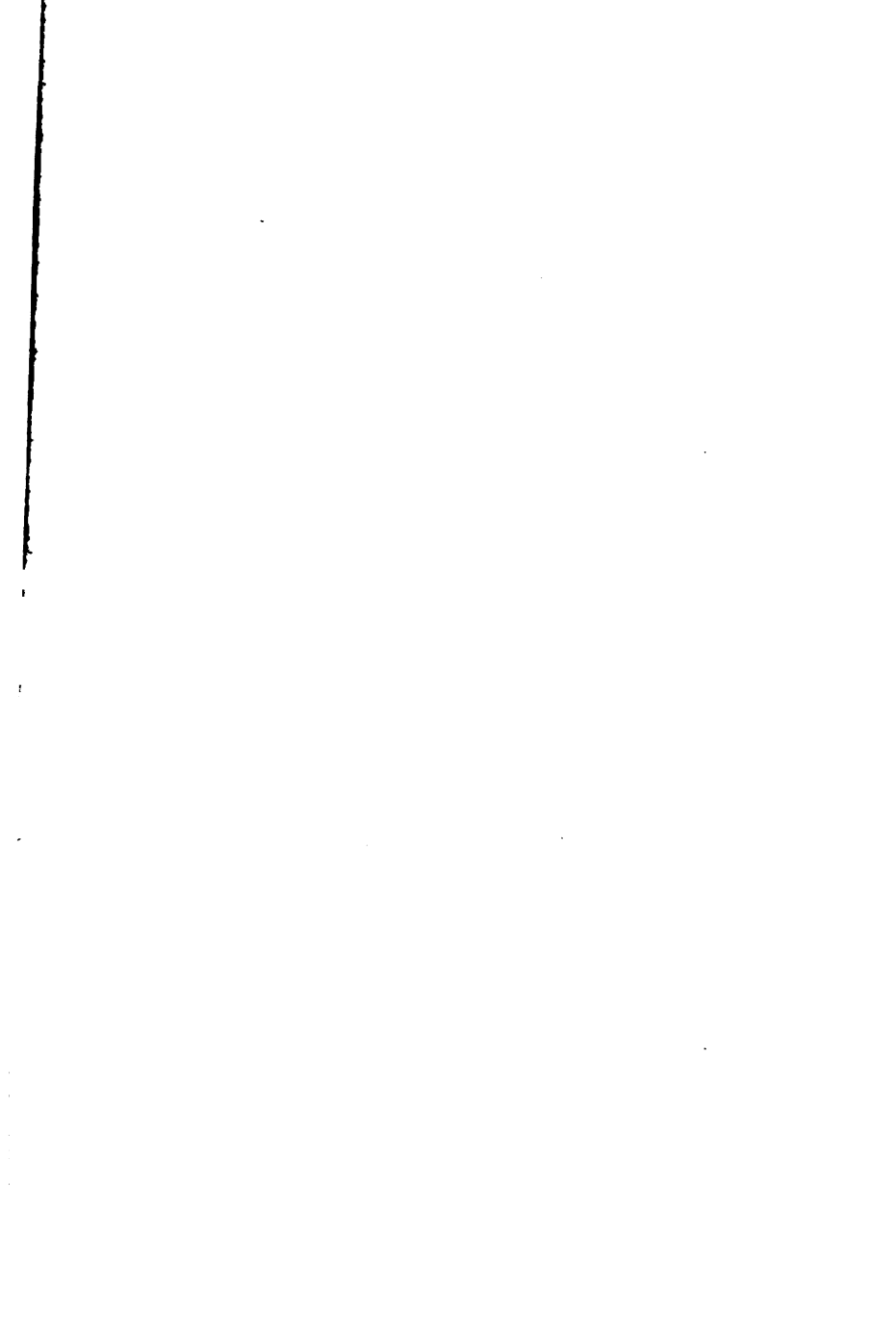


THE BEQUEST OF  
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL  
(CLASS OF 1882)  
OF NEW YORK

1918















MRS. WOFFINGTON.





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THE  
LIFE AND ADVENTURES  
OF  
PEG WOFFINGTON

WITH PICTURES OF THE PERIOD  
IN WHICH SHE LIVED

BY  
J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY

*In Two Volumes*

VOL. II.

NEW YORK  
DODD, MEAD, AND COMPANY  
1892

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# The Life and Adventures

OF

## PEG WOFFINGTON.

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### CHAPTER I.

Peg Woffington in Dublin. — A Command Night. — Going to the Play. — A Brilliant Audience. — Some Irish Celebrities of the Period. — 'The only Theme in or out of the Theatre.' — Mrs. Gunning and her Family. — Miss Bellamy's Account of Them. — Peg Woffington and the Gunnings. — The Beauties go to London. — Wooed and Wedded.

THIS autumn season of 1751, when the Woffington was engaged to play at Smock Alley Theatre, was one of exceptional brilliancy. Parliament was opened in October with great ceremony by the new lord-lieutenant, as representing His Most Gracious Majesty King George, the coach in which he rode to College Green being most superb, and seeming all glass and gold. Moreover, it was drawn by six horses, magnificently caparisoned; and by the traces stood six tiny pages, attired in the splendour of crim-

son velvet and gold lace, with feathered hats upon their curled heads, and swords by their little thighs. Then on either side of this great glass coach walked the gentlemen of the ducal retinue, in full dress, with their hats under their arms ; the whole presenting a prodigiously fine show. A vast number of persons of distinction flocked from England in the wake of the viceroy ; and most of the Irish county families settled in the capital for the winter.<sup>1</sup>

The additional attraction given to the season in the performances of Peg Woffington were

<sup>1</sup> To country ladies with pretensions to gentility or fashion, it was a certain necessity that they should spend at least part of the season in Dublin, and enjoy the festivities of the Castle ; the mere descriptions of which, doled out to their less fortunate neighbours, would form the subject of conversation for the remainder of the year. Concerning this desire of the provincial ladies to winter in town, 'Faulkner's Journal' of October, 1751, publishes the following quaint paragraph : —

'Some time ago we received a letter signed Sarah Lovacity, complaining for herself and many other ladies of their fathers and husbands not bringing them to town this winter, on account of the exorbitant price of hay and oats. Now we — agreeable to the ladies' commands, and our ardent desire of being blessed with their presence, being well assured that there can be neither splendour nor magnificence but where they are — have made strict inquiries, and have found hay from ten to eleven shillings per load, and oats from eight to nine shillings per barrel, and the markets falling.'

eagerly anticipated, and crowded houses at Smock Alley were duly expected by the manager. In the first week of September the 'Dublin Journal' stated that 'the workmen who have for some time past been employed in making the galleries of the theatre more spacious and commodious have now finished, and we hear it will be opened on the 16th of this month.' It was not, however, till the 5th of October that 'the celebrated Mrs. Woffington, from the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden,' was announced to perform the part of Lady Townley in 'The Provoked Husband;' the comedy being likewise supported by Sheridan, Theophilus Cibber, Digges, King, Mrs. Bland, and Miss Davies. The house was of course crowded, and the reception given the Woffington hearty; but it was not until a fortnight later, when by command of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, she repeated her performance of Lady Townley, that the theatrical season may be said to have commenced.

A command-night by the lord lieutenant was always regarded as an occasion of special grace. His presence, as well as that of his court and of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, whose courteous custom it was to likewise attend on such nights, gave an air of state and ceremony

little less than royal, to the performance. Moreover, a vast crowd of the fashionable world was sure to attend the playhouse on such occasions, and lend it all the charm and brilliancy of a court drawing-room. Accordingly, about five o'clock on this October evening, when their graces for the first time during the season visited the theatre, Smock Alley and the ways that led thereto became the scenes of strange and wonderful confusion. Already the great, lumbering, showily-painted coaches and sedan-chairs had commenced to invade the somewhat narrow thoroughfares, intent on depositing their burdens of the first rank and distinction at the playhouse-doors, where sentries in full uniform were drawn up on guard.

All was bustle, movement, and confusion; the noise of innumerable voices was deafening. Here were coachmen, red-faced and powder-wigged, thundering sturdy oaths at their steeds; footmen shouting and running to and fro; silver and gold laced lacqueys, with staffs surmounted by the coronets of their noble masters, striving to keep at bay the good-humoured crowd pushing forward to peep through the windows of the coaches; and plush-liveried chairmen cursing, with Hibernian heartiness, their sturdier fellows who had outstripped them in the race for place.

Horses pranced ; the city gamin screamed to each other, saluted such of the gentlefolk as were known to them, or who were rendered conspicuous by their dress ; a crowd of orange-women cried their wares ; the motley throngs, gathered round the pit and gallery doors, shouted witticisms and pleasant badinage as they crushed each other almost to death ; and the link-boys, who had already lighted their flambeaux, darted here and there, leaving flaming tracks, brief and lurid, in their fitful wakes.

Never was there such a to-do ; and in the midst of it all a cry was heard from the street-boys, hearty and full of cheer, as if in welcome to some old friend or well-approved favourite ; and then, followed by a right merry, though half-ragged crowd, came the Woffington's coach and pair, with servants in fine liveries, as grand as any lady of quality that came to see her. Turning to the throng with a smile that fell on and brightened them like a burst of sunshine, she descended from her coach with the air of a duchess, 'an' yet with as friendly a face as if she only left us yesterday,' says one of the orange-women, who stares at her as she enters the sacred portal of the stage-door. 'An' it's herself has the charitable heart,' says another, 'an' is the good daughter ; sure her mother has



nothin' in the world to do for the remainder of her days but say her prayers ; an' it 's the handsome velvet cloak and gold snuff-box she sports.' 'Ay, an' if it goes to that,' replied the first gossip, 'she wears a diamond ring too, — sure, she showed it to me herself a month ago ; an' they 're all the gifts of Peggy.'

Most of the people of quality have arrived by this time, and there is a lull in the street, until the tramp of cavalry is heard, and a cry of 'The duke ! the duke !' is carried down the street long before the first red-coat of his escort turns the corner. As the cavalry approaches, the crowd flies to right and left ; then the ducal coach is drawn up, the guard which lines the way, carpeted with scarlet cloth from the coach to the playhouse-door, presents arms, and the duke and duchess are met by Sheridan and Cibber, who stand bare-headed and with candles in their hands, ready to receive their graces, and conduct them to their boxes, canopied with scarlet silk, and emblazoned with the royal arms. As they enter, the orchestra strikes up the national anthem, and the house receives them with uncommon testimonies of joy. When they have bowed their thanks in a most gracious manner, up goes the curtain, and the manager comes forward and speaks a senseless prologue,

to the effect that when George committed the reins to Dorset's hands, the effect which immediately followed was as day superseding the tedious night ; the said Dorset was ever dear to the Muses nine, and his mere presence was sufficient to 'new warm the poet's lay, new rouse the actor's fire,' and do a vast number of other extraordinary things.

The playhouse had never presented a more brilliant appearance. In the centre of the horseshoe-shaped arena, illuminated with wax in honour of their graces, sat my Lord Mayor, wearing his scarlet cloak and chain of office, and beside him his lady, plump, as became the spouse of such a dignitary, and attired in green satin, as behoved her patriotic spirit. And in the boxes all round what an array of beauty and fashion, what a glitter of diamonds and precious stones, what a sheen of satins and silks, what a waving of feathered head-dresses and perfumed fans, what a gleaming of white shoulders and bosoms rising from billows of lace ! Near their graces' box sat my Lady Gormanstown, a rare beauty, with dark blue eyes, and hair that looked black as the raven's wing by night ; and with her my lord, who invariably dressed in a full suit of light blue. Close beside them was Lord Trimlestown, in scarlet clothes, gold-frogged,

and a full-powdered wig ; and where the soft light fell full on her box sat the Viscountess Grandison, a lily-fair beauty with eyes of tenderest blue, and smooth hair the colour of dead gold. Of course the Hon. Mrs. Butler was there, and in her box sat Miss Betty Forth, whose finery was almost flung into the gutter at the playhouse-door, through the overturning of her sedan-chair by its inebriated carriers. Likewise there was present Viscount Taaffe, whose son had years ago taken away this approved good actress whom they had all assembled to see ; and old Lord Kerry who dressed in crimson satin with gold frogs ; and Viscount Molesworth, whose favourite attire was purple satin and silver frogs ; and Sir John Meade, in black velvet with white facings. And opposite their graces' box was the sport-loving Lord Howth, who dressed after the manner of a groom, and wore a coachman's wig, with rows of many curls ; and the eccentric Captain Debrisay, who accounted in the style of a *habitué* of Charles the Second's court.

The pit too had its celebrities, and could boast of little Dr. Padmore of Britain Street, wearing black velvet and scarlet stockings ; and Counsellor Costello, a prime favourite with the populace, and a great lover of good plays ; and

George Faulkner, the proprietor of the 'Dublin Journal,' a round-stomached little man in brown clothes, who was a fine judge of the stage likewise. Presently, when the Woffington appeared, the brilliant crowd greeted her with uncommon applause, the pit lustily clapping its hands, the boxes waving their fans, the galleries cheering. And as she bowed her thanks, her beautifully rounded cheeks flushed crimson with pleasure, her liquid eyes sparkled with excitement, her perfect lips parted in a smile that lent a wonderful charm to her countenance. 'Her beauty,' admits the Bellamy, who set herself up as her rival, 'beggared all description.' But besides the loveliness of her face there was a grace in her bearing, a piquancy in her manner of speech, that completed the spell she exercised, and exalted it to fascination.

Press criticisms on performances were rare in those days, when critics were self-elected, and held sway in coffee-houses and taverns. It is therefore worth noting what George Faulkner printed, in the next issue of his paper, regarding this actress. Here it is: 'The celebrated Mrs. Woffington's performance in Smock Alley Theatre continues to draw the most crowded audiences hitherto known. Her elegant deportment at her first entrance is a prologue in her behalf.

Her correct pronunciation is accompanied by the most just and graceful action. Her unaffected ease and vivacity in comedy, her majestic pathos in tragedy, show her to be an exact imitation of Nature, without the least appearance of her handmaid, Art, though at the same time possessed and executed by that lady in the highest degree.

‘These eminent qualities have so universally obtained for her the esteem and applause of all the tasteful and judicious in this city, that it may be said of her, in imitation of Cæsar’s praise, “She came, was seen, and she triumphed.”’

Then follows a long eulogy in rhyme on her genius, which ends, —

‘Hail, then, in whom united we behold  
Whatever graced the theatres of old.  
A form above description; and a mind  
By judgment tempered and by wit refined.  
Cut off in beauty’s prime, when Oldfield died,  
The Muses wept and threw their harps aside;  
But now assumed, the lyre amazed to see  
Her greatest beauties far outdone by thee.’

Concerning these lines, Mr. Benjamin Victor, the treasurer of Smock Alley Theatre, found he had something to say; and accordingly he unburdened his mind in a quaintly penned letter, addressed, ‘To Mrs. Woffington in Dublin.’ ‘Madam,’ said he, ‘You have long been the

subject of true praise, and have received many public instances of it from the admiring world : but the scribbling fools here offer it up so fulsome, that instead of incense, I daresay it is as offensive to you as the snuff of a candle — now, madam, if my praise proves the snuff of a wax-candle, it will at least not offend, and I shall have reason to be satisfied.' This simile is rather obscure, but the manager goes on triumphantly. 'The silly poet in "Faulkner's Journal," on Saturday last, made me laugh. He made you the successor to the poor, antiquated Mrs. Vanderbank (who often declared that in her youth she was the glory of the Irish stage), and concludes it one of your least excellencies to far outdo Mrs. Oldfield.

'I was one of the audience when Lady Townley made her first appearance in London ; and since the death of that celebrated actress, Mrs. Oldfield, I have not seen a complete Lady Townley till last Monday night. You know, she was called *inimitable* in that character, by the author, Cibber, that great master of comedy ; but, I daresay, even he will admit that epithet falsified by your performance.

'After your first appearance in tragedy in London, I had the favour of two letters from him ; in the first he employed a whole sheet in your

praise in Andromache. I had so great a prepossession of your good understanding and his judgment, that I could easily give him credit, though I had known him long an admirer of your person.

‘On Wednesday night last I was convinced that you are a most provoking creature (to use the Laureat’s phrase). You are not content with destroying all our females, but make even our heroes shrink before you. I take this opportunity of congratulation, and beg to remain, madam, your most humble servant.’

Night after night she played to densely crowded houses, appearing alternately as Andromache and Hermione in ‘The Distressed Mother ;’ Sylvia in ‘The Recruiting Officer ;’ Calista in ‘The Fair Penitent ;’ and Sir Henry Wildair in ‘The Constant Couple ;’ and never failed to meet with the most enthusiastic applause. Hitchcock, in his ‘View of the Irish Stage,’ says, speaking of the Woffington, ‘Her reception was such as surprised the most sanguine expectations of her friends, and astonished even the manager, who was highly pleased with his acquisition. It is almost impossible to describe the raptures the audience were in at beholding so beautiful, elegant, and accomplished a woman, or the happy consequences

which resulted to Mr. Sheridan.' On this latter point, Victor adds his testimony. 'By four of her characters,' he writes, 'performed ten nights each that season, there were taken about four thousand pounds; an instance never known in any theatre from four old stock-plays, and two of them in which the manager acted no part.'

Presently Colley Cibber's comedy of 'The Nonjuror,' not acted in Dublin for eight years, was rehearsed and duly played, in order to give the Woffington an opportunity of appearing as Maria in this comedy; she was likewise to dance a minuet, and all the *dramatis personæ* were to figure in a country dance. Great were the audiences that assembled to witness the play, and so numerous were the poems and criticisms, eulogising her, which were showered upon 'Faulkner's Journal' that the editor was obliged to apologise for their non-appearance, and offer his would-be contributors the hackneyed excuse of want of space.

Sheridan was now anxious to revive some Shakespearian plays, and sounded the public on the matter by the following advertisement: 'The manager of the Theatre Royal proposes to perform the six following plays of Shakspeare as soon as the boxes are engaged; viz., "Richard," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "King



John, "The Merchant of Venice," and "As You Like It." The plays will be performed in order, according to the number of places taken for each. The house will be illuminated with wax-lights. Places to be taken of Mr. Neil, box-keeper.'

To see Peg Woffington and Sheridan in Shakespearian plays was a treat which the stage-loving people of this good city could not resist, and places were quickly taken, their Graces of Dorset giving command-nights for 'The Merchant of Venice,' 'Hamlet,' and 'As You Like It.' The Woffington had been praised before, but she was now lauded exceedingly. Panegyrics on her person, her elegant deportment, her graceful acting, appeared almost daily in the press, as likewise verses comparing her to the most charming of the Muses, the most beautiful of the goddesses. She was the pride and glory of the stage, she pleased the giddy age, she read aright the author's page, and did many other excellent things. To Sheridan, another poetaster admitted much was due; 'for,' said he, quaintly enough, 'we owe our Woffington to you.' Their mutual talents, this young gentleman was of opinion, 'shall adorn the scene, and add new lustre to a Dorset's reign.' But people more sensible than poets

spoke well of the Woffington's talents ; and amongst them was a correspondent and admirer of the Countess of Orrery, who says, ' The brilliant Mrs. Woffington is the only theme either in or out of the theatre. Her performances are in general admirable. In *Andromache* her grief was dignified and her deportment elegant ; in *Hermione* she discovered such talents as have not been displayed since the celebrated Mrs. Porter, whom I daresay Lord Orrery remembers — such commanding force, such variety, such graceful attitudes ; the very fools stared and felt her powers. In short, poor Bland is inevitably undone, for those fools (her greatest admirers) who had not sense enough to see her defects before, now see them by the comparison. I heartily wish I had force enough to excite a desire in your ladyship to come to Dublin to see this actress.'

On the 9th of March, 1752, she took her benefit, on which occasion she again played *Lady Townley*. Their Graces of Dorset were present, and so great was the demand for tickets that it was announced ' the pit will be laid open to the boxes for the convenience of the ladies.' This memorable theatrical season ended in May.

It was during this visit to Ireland that Peg

Woffington made the acquaintance of two young ladies of quality, who soon afterwards became famous throughout Europe for their rare loveliness, and were invariably spoken of as 'the beautiful Gunnings.' Their father, John Gunning, a thriftless Irish gentleman, is described as hailing from 'Castle Coote in Ireland;' but, inasmuch as he was wholly penniless, it is safe to argue that his castle was a mere ruin—more picturesque than tenatable, as castles, alas, in Ireland are wont to be. He had married Bridget Bourke, a daughter of the sixth Viscount Mayo, who became the mother of children remarkable for beauty from their infancy. The parents of these budding graces seem to have lived in a state of chronic poverty; to which George Anne Bellamy bears witness in those interesting, if somewhat scandalous memoirs written for her by Alexander Bicknell, in an amusingly inflated and most verbose style. During her stay in Dublin, in 1754, she tells us that one day, as she was passing through Britain Street on her way from rehearsal, she heard some cries of distress, when, yielding to what she calls the impulses of humanity, but which might probably be better described as the temptations of curiosity, she 'overleaped the bounds of good breeding,' and stepped into

the house. Led by an irresistible attraction, this gushing young lady entered without ceremony into the parlour, the doors of which, it may be significantly noted, 'appeared to be guarded by persons not at all suited to those within.' Here she found a gentlewoman of a most elegant figure, surrounded by her children, one of whom was 'a sweet boy.'

George Anne courtesied, apologised for her abrupt intrusion, and informed the lady with the elegant figure, otherwise Mrs. Gunning, that the lamentations of the family had reached her ears, on which she had taken the liberty of inquiring if she could be of any assistance. It was now Mrs. Gunning's turn to make a polite speech. She complimented her visitor upon possessing 'such humane sensations,' and informed her that, being in debt, her husband had found it necessary to seek a seclusion unknown to bumbailiffs. Mrs. Gunning added that she had been in hopes her brother, Lord Mayo, 'listening to the dictates of fraternal affection, would not suffer a sister and her family to be reduced to distress;' but that his lordship remained in a condition, common to peers and others with numerous and needy relatives, elegantly described as 'inflexible to repeated solicitations.' At this stage of the conversation,

some ill-looking men, already referred to as bumbailiffs, entered the apartment; whereon Mrs. Gunning and the sympathetic George Anne retired to consult what was best to be done in so disagreeable a predicament. In a little while the actress departed; but when night came, with her sable shadows, a dark figure might have been observed hovering in the vicinity of Mrs. Gunning's house. This was none other than Miss Bellamy's man-servant, seeing whom, Mrs. Gunning noiselessly raised her drawing-room windows and flung out such of her household goods as she could manage to convey to him, which he carried to the actress's lodgings. Here two of the budding graces — Maria, who was 'all life and spirits,' and Miss Betty, who was 'more reserved and solid' — were subsequently brought.

Now it happened that when Peg Woffington came to Dublin, she took up her residence in Capel Street, at a house opposite that occupied by the Gunning family. The graces had by this time budded, and had now reached the respective ages of seventeen and eighteen years. Seeing the Woffington daily walk in silk attire, or drive in her elegant coach, witnessing, likewise, the attention she commanded, and hearing the praises lavished on her, these young girls, dow-

ered with a divine gift of surpassing loveliness, resolved that they too would become actresses. Then there rose before them visions in which they saw themselves dressed in purple and fine linen, lauded, fêted, and with all the world at their feet. But this resolve was not one which they were allowed to carry out. They were the daughters of a gentleman who had once possessed a castle, and the nieces of a viscount ; and though he had remained 'inflexible to repeated solicitations,' yet for his sake they must endure a lowly lot — nay, even starvation itself — rather than take a step which in those days it was considered would entail disgrace on a family even to the third and fourth generations. However, if they dared not try their fortunes on public stages, they might at least adventure in private drawing-rooms. Having come to this conclusion, they clearly saw their first step towards such an end must be to get presented at the Castle. There was no difficulty in procuring a *chaperone* to undertake the required introduction, but there was an obstacle which at first sight seemed insurmountable. Nature had given them wonderful beauty, but fortune had denied them decent dresses. Now, the one seemed worthless without the other, for though a poet had declared beauty unadorned was adorned

most, the world was prosaic, and would prove heartlessly intolerant of any attempt to test the virtue of this assertion savouring of the flesh, no matter how true in spirit. Alack-a-day, what was to be done? Dresses or money they had none.

At this point in their dilemma the thought of Peg Woffington flashed on them like an inspiration. They had heard she was willing to help all who asked her; and they knew, from watching her at the windows, that her wardrobe was varied and splendid. Summoning heart of grace, they therefore wrote to her, asking if she would lend them dresses in which they might be presented at court. To this request the Woffington replied, with ready good nature, that they might come and select from her stock such gowns as pleased them best. And so it happened that Maria and Betty Gunning — afterwards destined to become respectively a countess and a duchess — made their début in society in the borrowed robes of an actress. Their success at the viceregal court was great; two angels, it was said, had dropped from the clouds. Their praises were on every tongue. Therefore Mrs. Gunning, who was wise in her generation, determined to carry them further a-field, and present them to London society, where men of

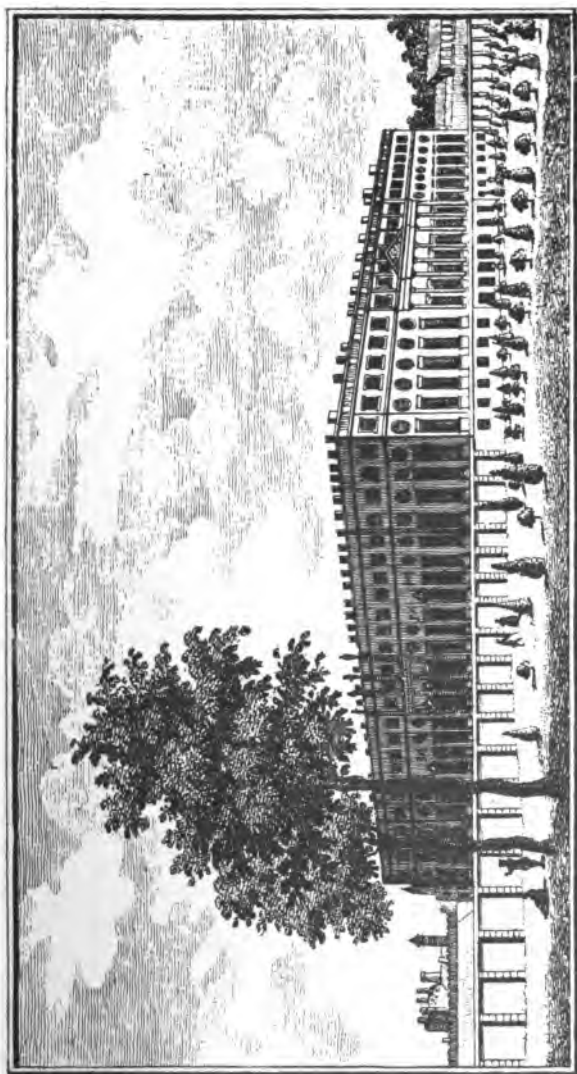
position and wealth were more numerous, and less given to fortune hunting than in the Irish capital. An annuity of £150 which she at this time inherited, enabled her to put her project into execution at once. It may be too that it was hastened by an incident which adds an additional colour of romance to the remarkable career of the beauties. So elated were they by their triumph at the viceregal court, and at the prospects so newly opened up before them, that they became anxious to know their fate; and accordingly, with national credulity, sought out a mysterious hag, who, by virtue of her supposed close social relationship to the Devil, enjoyed a reputation for revealing the future to those who consulted her. To the Gunnings her promises of high rank and brilliant fortune were liberal, but to one of them she likewise predicted a premature death.

So Mrs. Gunning and her daughters fair set out for London town; and in due course were introduced to the Court of George II., who kissed them with a heartiness unusual to the stereotyped osculation customary at royal presentations. So great was the sensation they made that the town could talk of nothing else save their extraordinary beauty. 'The two Miss Gunnings,' writes Walpole, 'are twenty times

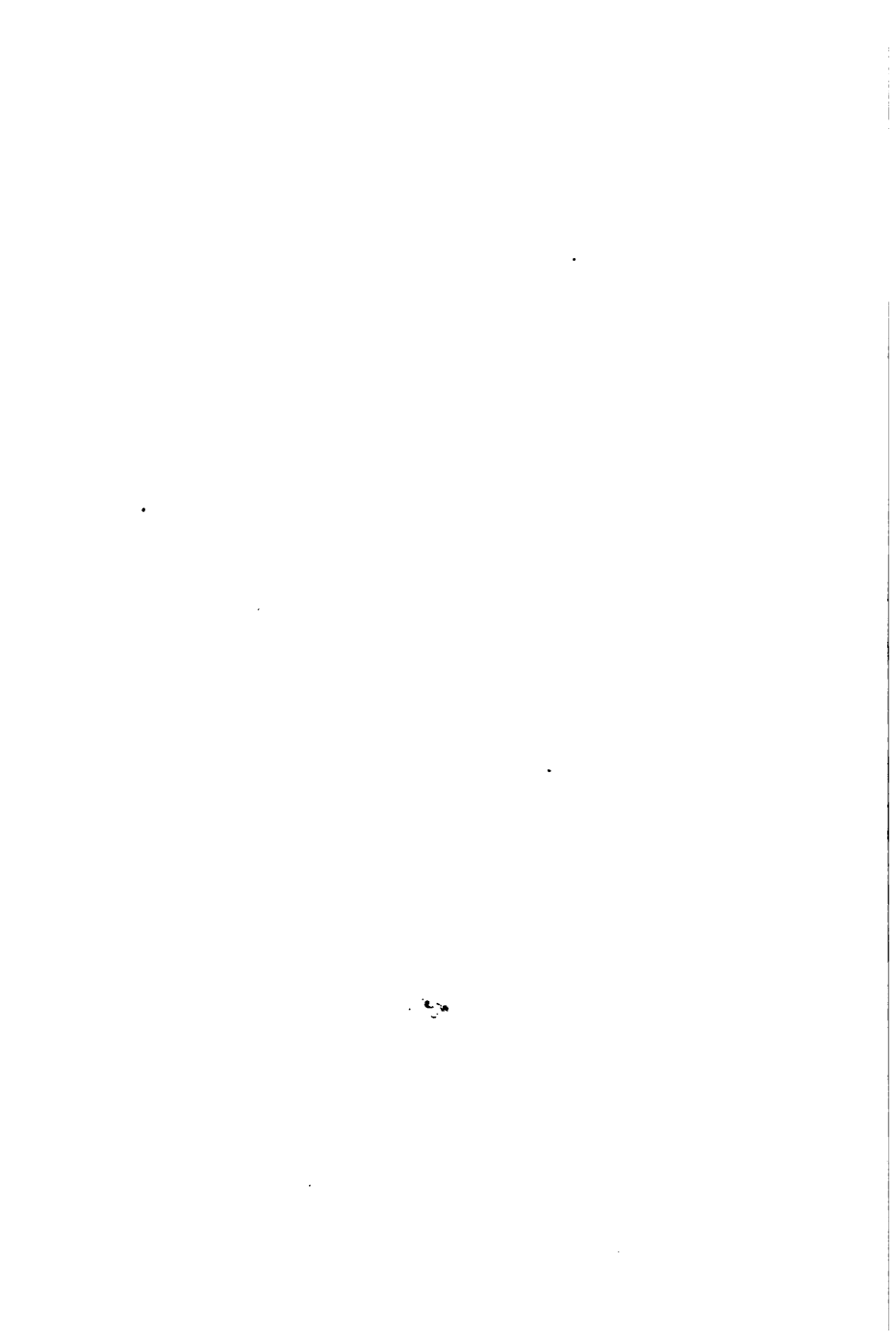


more the subject of conversation than the two brothers Newcastle and Pelham, and Lord Granville. These are two Irish girls of no fortune, who are declared the handsomest women alive. I think their being two, so handsome, and both such perfect figures, is their chief excellence ; for singly, I have seen much handsomer women than either ; however, they can't walk in the Park, or go to Vauxhall, but such mobs follow them that they are generally driven away.'

So anxious were the people to catch a glimpse of them that when it was known they were going to the theatre, vast numbers assembled at the playhouse-doors, and waited there hours before their arrival ; and on one occasion, whilst taking the air on the Mall, the mob was so great that they were obliged to seek the protection of a file of the Guards. In another letter Walpole tells a story of the beauties, 'who made more noise than any of their predecessors since the days of Helen.' They went down to see Hampton Court ; and as they were going into the Beauty Room, another company arrived. 'The housekeeper said, "This way, ladies ; here are the Beauties."' The Gunnings flew into a passion, and asked her what she meant ; they came to see the palace, and not to be



HAMPTON COURT FROM THE GARDENS.



showed as a sight themselves.' Every day it seemed as if their reputation increased. A bootmaker, by the exhibition of a shoe belonging to Miss Betty at a penny a head, realised the sum of two guineas and a half in one day; wits made epigrams in praise of them; beaux paid them courtly homage; their names were coupled with a thousand toasts. The objects of such admiration were wise enough to estimate their charms at their proper matrimonial worth; and the fine gentlemen who had no titles with which to ennoble them, or wealth with which to endow them, received no encouragement; whilst those so possessed were smiled on with heavenly sweetness. Amongst those favoured in this manner were James fourth Duke of Hamilton, and George William sixth Earl of Coventry, both of whom subsequently became the respective husbands of the beauties. The story of their wooings and of one of their weddings is inimitably told by the prince of letter writers. 'The event that has made most noise since my last,' writes Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, in February, 1752, 'is the extempore wedding of the youngest of the two Gunnings, who have made so vehement a noise. Lord Coventry, a grave young lord of the remains of the patriot breed, has long dangled after the eldest, virtu-

ously with regard to her virtue, not very honourably with regard to his own credit. About six weeks ago Duke Hamilton, the very reverse of the earl, hot, debauched, extravagant, and equally damaged in his fortune and person, fell in love with the youngest at the masquerade, and determined to marry her in the spring. About a fortnight since, at an immense assembly at my Lord Chesterfield's, made to show the house, which is really most magnificent, Duke Hamilton made violent love at one end of the room, while he was playing at pharaoh at the other end, — that is, he saw neither the bank nor his own cards, which were of three hundred pounds each ; he soon lost a thousand. I own I was so little a professor in love that I thought all this parade looked ill for the poor girl, and could not conceive, if he was so much engaged with his mistress as to disregard such sums, why he played at all. However, two nights afterwards, being left alone with her, while her mother and sister were at Bedford House, he found himself so impatient that he sent for a parson. The doctor refused to perform the ceremony without license or ring ; the duke swore he would send for the archbishop. At last they were married with a ring of the bed-curtain, at half an hour after twelve at night, at



COUNTESS OF COVENTRY.



Mayfair Chapel. The Scotch are enraged. The women mad that so much beauty has had its effect ; and what is most silly, my Lord Coventry declares that now he will marry the other.'

The earl was as good as his word, and Maria Gunning was, on the 5th of March, 1752, made Countess of Coventry. When the duchess was presented at court, a great crowd assembled to see her ; 'the noble mob,' says Walpole, 'clambered upon chairs and tables to look at her.' Then he gives us a glimpse, which he says is not unentertaining, of their graces domestic life. 'Duke Hamilton,' he tells Horace Mann, 'is the abstract of Scotch pride ; he and the duchess at their own house walk in to dinner before their company, sit together at the upper end of their own table, eat off the same plate, and drink to nobody beneath the rank of earl. Would not one wonder how they could get anybody either above or below that rank to dine with them at all ?'

The poor, foolish Countess of Coventry was not quite so happy in her married life ; her grave young lord was 'jealous, prude, and scrupulous,' and watched over her closely. Among other things which he objected to was her painting her beautiful face red and white, after the fashion of the age. That she bedaubed her cheeks



with a liberal hand my Lord Chesterfield testifies ; ' for,' says his observing lordship, ' I was near enough to see manifestly that she had laid on a great deal of white, which she does not want, and which would destroy both her natural complexion and her teeth.' It did more than that, it hastened, if not actually caused, her death. It was in vain that my lord protested against the usage, so one day, by way of teaching her a lesson, he, while at Sir John Bland's house, before a company of sixteen persons assembled to dine, coursed her round the table, and forcibly scrubbed off the red with a napkin. The poor countess used to confide her wonder to her friends that her lord could use her so ill, when she knew he had so great a regard that he would die for her, and when he was so good as to marry her without a shilling.

## CHAPTER II.

A Second Dublin Season. — The Acme of her Fame. — The Beefsteak Club. — The Sublime Society of Beefsteaks. — Political Disturbances. — The Tragedy of 'Mahomet.' — Mr. Digges and the Audience. — Sheridan's Address to his Company. — Riot in the Playhouse. — Sheridan's Address. — Peg Woffington leaves Ireland.

THE beautiful Gunnings had been fêted, wooed, and wedded whilst Peg Woffington was yet in Ireland. At the commencement of the season 1752, Sheridan engaged her at a salary of eight hundred pounds, which was then considered prodigiously large. This began on the night of the 8th of October, when the Woffington played the part of Lady Betty Modish. A week later she appeared in the character of Belvidera in 'Venice Preserved,' by command of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset. Later on, according to the bills, she played in 'Julius Cæsar,' in 'Ulysses,' 'writ by Mr. Rowe,' and in Congreve's delightful comedies. The season, so far as its success was concerned, proved a repetition of the previous winter. In tragedy and

comedy, Peg Woffington was pronounced alike inimitable ; and crowded houses nightly testified to her vast popularity. ' At this time,' says Hitchcock, ' the theatre was the fashionable resort of all ranks. Crowded every night with the first characters in the kingdom, it was in reality a source of entertainment and instruction. Its exhibitions might grace a Greek or a Roman stage. Propriety, order, and decorum presided over the whole. Its professors were held in the highest esteem, admitted into the first assemblies, and treated with the utmost respect.' In social life, as well as in theatrical, the Woffington's society was sought after, not only for her beauty, but for her humour, her ability, and the sweetness of her natural disposition. ' It was at this era,' says Charles Macklin, ' that Woffington might have been said to have reached the acme of her fame. She was then in the bloom of her person, accomplishments, and profession ; highly distinguished for her wit and vivacity ; with a charm of conversation that at once attracted the admiration of the men and the envy of the women. Her company off was equally sought for as on the stage ; and though she did not much admire the frivolity of her own sex, and consequently did not mix much with them, she was the delight

of some of the gravest and most scientific characters in Church and State.'

For a while all went well, but at the close of the second season, both Sheridan and the Woffington found themselves stranded on a political rock that wrecked their chances of regaining the popular good will. The small beginning from which this great event sprang, was the establishment of the Beefsteak Club. Such clubs, Benjamin Victor says, were 'of ancient institution in every theatre, when the principal performers dined one day in the week together, generally Saturday, and authors and other geniuses were admitted members.' A Beefsteak Club had been established in London in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the providore of which was Dick Estcourt, a wonderful mimic, the pleasantest of boon companions, and an actor who 'had the honour (nature endowing him with an easy, free, and unaffected mode of eloquence) in comedy to lætificate his audience, especially the quality.' By virtue of his office as providore, Estcourt wore a small gold gridiron suspended from his neck, of which the merry fellow was mighty proud. The club was composed of the chief wits and great men of the nation, and amongst those who most frequently gathered round the cheerful board in

Estcourt's house in Covent Garden, were Sir Roger de Coverley, facetious Doctor King, and Sir Robert Steele, who loved Estcourt well, and mourned him true.

There was likewise the Sublime Society of Steaks, founded by Rich and Charles Mordaunt, known as the mad Earl of Peterborough, about 1735. Rich, the father of English harlequinades, manager of Covent Garden playhouse, and lover of cats, was in the habit of arranging, in a private room in his theatre, the wonderful tricks he would play as harlequin, the astounding transformations he would reveal by a wave of his magic wand, and the various other comic businesses of his entertainments. To this apartment frequently came the polished courtier and skilled diplomatist, Lord Peterborough, the friend of Pope, the companion of Dean Swift, who humorously described him as, —

‘A skeleton in outward figure.’

His lordship subsequently privately married the charming singer, Anastasia Robinson, who loved him faithfully. Indeed, the eccentric earl had a charm that won women's hearts; moreover, he was a man of varied talents, and loved to hold converse with wits, poets, and players, by reason of which fancy he spent many a pleasant

hour with Rich. It happened one day that he tarried in the manager's room until the clock struck two, when Rich rose up to spread a white cloth on the table, for he was a regular man, and ate his dinner betimes, as became a harlequin. Presently he proceeded to cook his beefsteak, begging that his lordship might stay and share his meal. Nothing loth, Peterborough at once assented, when another steak was clapped on the gridiron, and a second bottle of good port sent for to 'The Rose and Crown Tavern' close by, when the peer and the player sat down and enjoyed themselves heartily. So delighted, indeed, was the earl that he proposed they should dine in the same place and manner on the following Saturday, and begged that he might be allowed to bring with him some men of parts. To this Rich readily enough assented, and in this manner was founded the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks, which held its own down to the middle of the present century, changing its quarters more than once, and ending its merry days in the Lyceum Theatre.

The Beefsteak Club which Sheridan founded was modelled on somewhat different lines. It was opened by a dinner given in the great room of the theatre, the guests invited numbering about fifty, who were either peers, members of

parliament, or men of the first distinction. Thirty of these accepted the invitation, enrolled themselves members of the club, and elected the charming Woffington as their president. She and Sheridan were the only players who were admitted, and Peg Woffington had the further distinction of being the only female member. What added to the singularity of the club was that its founder defrayed all costs in connection with it. 'The reader will readily believe,' says Benjamin Victor, 'that a club where there were good accommodations, such a lovely president full of wit and spirit, and nothing to pay, must soon grow remarkably fashionable.' Fashionable it certainly became; witty peers, castle courtiers, and men of fashion flocked round the manager's hospitable board once a week, when never was there such a flow of humour, such mirth, such conviviality. 'Yet,' says Macklin, 'though wit and spirit here took their most excursive flights, they never once broke through the laws of decorum.'

Now it happened at this very time that politics, never long absent from the surface of Irish life, ran particularly high. 'Our city of Dublin,' writes Victor to Mrs. Knight in London, 'in the parliamentary winters used to be the assembly of all the people of figure and fortune in



MRS. KNIGHT.





the kingdom, who have had nothing to do here these thirty years past but the government business and pursuing their pleasures; but this winter a very strange thing called *patriotism* has appeared, and as violent an opposition in the House of Commons as ever was known in England to the measures of the government, which has drove the whole people into the most outrageous spirit of party ever known in the kingdom. The consequence will, I fear, be fatal to many of these patriots, for the king will no doubt support his viceroy, and all within the power of government have lost their places and pensions — a loss I daresay they will have leisure to be sorry for. This, you will suppose, has been very detrimental to all public diversions, and the theatre has greatly suffered by these commotions.'

The Duke of Dorset, who had commenced his reign with great popularity, had speedily fallen into disfavour with the people; not from any personal faults, but rather from the political policy he represented. Discord and discontent rapidly spread through the nation, and in the capital party spirit was rampant. The Beef-steak Club, numbering among its members Lord George Sackville the Duke of Dorset's son, and being principally composed of courtiers

and the supporters of government measures, public indignation was raised against it, and was inflamed by the knowledge that the toasts drunk at the manager's hospitable board were not of the most patriotic complexion. The club was not in reality used for any party purpose whatsoever, its object being the promotion of conviviality; but the fact of the toasts being favourable in their sentiments to the Castle policy was sufficient to render it distasteful to popular prejudices. It was but a natural consequence that the indignation should speedily turn from the club itself to its founder. Therefore Sheridan, once so popular, quickly became an object of suspicion and dislike, and the public determined to give him proof of their feelings on the first opportunity which presented itself.

All this was not of course the growth of a day. The club had been founded in February, 1753, and it was not until a year later that Sheridan's patrons seized upon an opportunity of venting their long-harboured resentment. It happened in this way. It was announced that 'the tragedy called Mahomet' would be performed at Smock Alley Theatre on the 2d of February, 1754. The citizens, being familiar with the play, knew it contained several speeches

denouncing wicked ministers of State and court favourites, which speeches they at once determined to distinguish by applause. Several of the actors, being aware of this, resolved to emphasise such passages by way of expressing their sympathies with the audience. When the night of that eventful 2d of February arrived, the house was crowded, and it was readily seen that a spirit of mischief brooded over the pit; a place in which such spirits are popularly supposed to dwell in theatres and elsewhere. The principal characters in the tragedy were undertaken by Sheridan, Peg Woffington, and Digges, an actor whose handsome person, graceful bearing, and careful playing rendered him a popular favourite.

In the first act of 'Mahomet,' Digges, who played the part of Alcanor, delivered the following sentiment in a notably marked manner :

'If, ye powers divine !  
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,  
And bring them to account ? Crush, crush those vipers,  
Who, singled out by the community  
To guard their rights, shall for a grasp of ore,  
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe.'

So applicable were those lines considered by the audience to those who sat in high places that they were immediately greeted by thunders

of applause, which ceased but to give place to a cry of 'Encore, encore,' with a vehemence that admitted of no refusal. In a moment the theatre was in an uproar. Digges therefore repeated the words, which were again applauded, and the play was then allowed to proceed. But throughout the night all Alcanor's speeches savouring of the same character as this met with a like reception; whilst the finest efforts of the Woffington and Sheridan were passed over in silence. The demonstration of party spirit which had in this manner crept into the theatre might have ended here, if the play had not been again performed. Strange as it may seem that the manager allowed the tragedy to be repeated, it was yet scarcely in his power to decline producing it, as notices continually appeared in the 'Dublin Journal' to the effect that, 'as the manager of the Theatre Royal is determined to give the greatest variety of plays in his power to the publick, he intends to repeat none that have been presented in the former part of the season, unless they should be particularly bespoke. He could wish that such ladies as want to see any particular play performed would send their commands to the box-keeper, according to the custom in London; for by this method the manager could form a more certain judgment of

what plays were most called for. There will be a memorandum book for the purpose kept by Mr. Neil at his house in Abbey Street, and there shall be at least a week's notice given of the day of performance of any such plays.'

Taking advantage of this custom, a vast number of ladies, probably at the desire of their lords, or such as they hoped to make their lords, crowded to Mr. Neil's house, and there entered their request that 'Mahomet' should be again performed. Before the month was out, it was therefore announced that the tragedy would be represented, for the second time that season, on Saturday night, March the 2d, 1754. Sheridan was fully aware of the storm which was brooding, and which might at any moment break above his head. It was his duty, therefore, to guard against it as far as possible, and for this purpose he, on the Friday morning previous to the representation of the play, requested the members of his company to meet him in the green room. When they had assembled, he entered, bowed, and addressed them. He regretted that a party had become so universal in Dublin as to make its appearance on the stage, a most improper place for the display of political spirit; on account of this he thought it his duty to lay before them a rule by which they

ought to act at such a juncture. He did not pretend to dictate to them regarding their private sentiments, but he considered it the business of an actor to divest himself as much as possible of such, and enter with all the spirit he was master of into the character he represented. But if an actor, in order to please part of the public, should by any unusual emphasis, gesture, or significant look, mark out a passage in his part which at another juncture he would have passed by lightly, he stepped out of his feigned character into his natural one ; than which nothing could be more disgusting or insolent to any auditor who came with no other intent but of seeing the play. Such a performer ought, he said, to be looked upon by the public as an incendiary, as one who throws the brand of discord amongst them ; for supposing persons of a different way of thinking should take it into their heads to resent and oppose this behaviour, the theatre, instead of serving as a place of entertainment, would become a scene of riot and disorder.

At this point Digges rose up, and said the drift of this lecture was evidently directed to him ; Sheridan, in reply, acknowledged that he was the first actor he ever heard of who repeated a speech upon the encore of an audience ;

but he felt sure his compliance arose from the suddenness of the demand, and the want of time to reflect on the ill consequences which might have arisen from his acceding to the request. Digges then said that as the demand was almost certain to be repeated the following night, he wished to know how he should act ; to which the manager wisely made answer that he would give him no directions, but would leave him to do as he thought proper.

'Sir,' said Digges, 'if I should comply with the demand of the audience, and repeat the speech, am I to incur your censure?'

Sheridan replied, 'Not at all ; I leave you to act in the matter as you think proper.'

This concluded the audience between the manager and his company. Next night, almost as soon as the doors were opened, the theatre was densely packed. The pit looked capable of dark things, the gallery dangerous ; a feeling of excitement and apprehension settled over the whole house. A storm brooded in the atmosphere ; nor was it long before it burst. The moment Digges made his appearance, he was greeted with universal applause ; then silence settled on the house whilst it waited breathlessly on the delivery of the lines commencing, 'Ye powers.' No sooner were these spoken than



they were greeted with loud acclamations, mingled with cries of 'Encore ! encore !' Digges, as if undecided, paused, when the cries burst out again with great fierceness ; then Digges, making a motion of his hand to enforce silence, stepped forward and said, ' It would give him the highest pleasure imaginable to comply with the request of the audience ; but he had his private reasons for begging they would be so good as to excuse him, as his compliance would be greatly injurious to him.'

The cowardly insinuation conveyed in these words fired the house with indignation, and gave those present the long-sought-for pretext of expressing their feelings towards the manager. Accordingly, an angry and imperative cry of ' Sheridan ! Sheridan ! ' went up from the pit, and was echoed by the gallery ; on which Digges left the stage, and the curtain was ordered down. The manager was not inclined to comply with the request of the audience, but sent the prompter forward to say the actors were ready to perform the play, if suffered to do so ; if not, all present could have their money returned to them. A fresh outburst followed the delivery of this message, and again cries for Sheridan rang through the house. Angered and agitated by this, the manager, who was standing behind the scenes,

declared they had no right to call on him, and he would not obey them ; saying which he went to his room and commenced to undress. He was quickly followed by some of his friends, who, leaving the boxes, hurried round to entreat him to pacify the people, who were every moment becoming more enraged. To this request he firmly refused to accede. Looking back over the years of his management, it seemed to him that all his spirited exertions for the public entertainment, all his labours for the purification of the stage, were in a moment forgotten by those he had sought to serve and amuse. He was perhaps more grieved than angered ; the hour had now arrived, he said, when he could no longer support the stage upon a footing of which the world had approved for many years, and he was therefore resolved to have done with it.

Even in his dressing-room the ominous sound of the angry storm reached him, and believing it was the intention of the crowd to do him personal violence, he left the theatre, got into a chair, and was carried to his house in Dorset Street. By this time nothing could equal the uproar and confusion that raged amongst the audience ; calls for the manager, deafening cries for vengeance on all court favourites, and shouts

demanding the firing of the house filled the theatre. In the midst of this Babel, the curtain went up, and the Woffington came forward, in hopes that she might be able to throw some oil upon the troubled waters. But in this hour her sovereign beauty had no effect upon the people, for she was not only a member of the obnoxious club, but its president; and those who had a little while before followed every inflection of her voice with rapture now refused to hear her speak. She therefore indignantly withdrew, and as a last resource to assuage the fury of the people, Digges stepped on the stage. He was now the favourite of the hour, and immediately the storm abated, to hear that which he had to say. He told them the manager had not laid him under an injunction not to repeat the speech, and had not therefore incurred their deeply deplored indignation. But this acknowledgment had come too tardily; the hurricane, raging at its highest pitch, was not to be easily subdued.

Moreover, Sheridan had refused to obey the voice of the people and come forward, and this was in itself a sufficient and independent cause for anger and resentment; they were resolved he should apologise. Therefore they called for him once more, on which Digges told them

he had left the house some time. The pit then held a consultation, the result of which was, two of its leaders, described as 'persons of condition and gravity,' rose up and requested the manager might be sent for, adding that the house would wait an hour for his return. Messages were therefore speedily dispatched to Dorset Street, acquainting Sheridan of what had passed ; but true to his first resolution, he declined to obey those who had no authority to command him. Meanwhile the audience kept possession of the playhouse, and amused itself very much to its liking as the hour of grace wore on. At the expiration of that time, the two persons of condition and gravity rose up once more, and asked if Mr. Sheridan was forthcoming. As they obtained no satisfactory reply, the impatient crowd immediately set to work on the business of the night. The ladies were first carefully handed out, and no sooner had the last of the fair creatures betaken herself to her sedan, than a youth in the pit, who was eager for the fray, jumped up and cried out, 'God bless King George with three huzzas !' This invocation for so strange a method of benediction was regarded as the signal for attack ; the mob therefore, the greater portion of which consisted of men of condition, fell on the house with a ruth-

lessness engendered by long delay, and in five minutes the audience part of the theatre was a complete wreck. Not satisfied with this, the ring-leaders, swords in hand, jumped upon the stage, cut and slashed the finely painted curtain which had cost a vast sum of money, smashed and tore the scenes which came within their reach, and then rushed to the wardrobe. Fortunately this had been well protected, and being unable to break into it, the idea occurred to these ruffians to fire the house. They therefore dragged a grate full of burning coals into the middle of the box-room, left some broken doors upon them, and departed with the happy conviction that the whole building would be wrapt in flames in a little while ; such a catastrophe was, however, fortunately prevented.

In the mean time, the treasurer, Benjamin Victor, seeing the theatre attacked, hastened to the Castle to inform the lord lieutenant of the extreme danger to which the house was exposed. The duke listened to him with all the patience and resignation with which one man hears of another's distress, and then suggested that Victor should go to the lord mayor. Arriving at the Mansion House, he found his lordship had been suddenly and sadly visited with a pain in his great toe, and so severe was the

suffering of that afflicted member that it wholly prevented my lord mayor from mixing in this party warfare. From the mayor to the sheriffs Victor next betook himself; but strange to say, these gentlemen were not at home, nor were any of the city magistrates to be found, though it is a significant fact that the taverns were searched for them as places where they were most apt to be seen. At last, about one o'clock in the morning, Victor discovered a deputy-constable; but alas, the captain of the guard refused to march under such a dignity, or rather indignity, for the said deputy-constable is spoken of in Victor's pages as 'a low, mean, sorry scoundrel,' whose hand, it may be safely inferred, was never closed to the offer of a guinea.

The theatre was therefore left to its fate, and became a wreck. For a time all performances were impossible; but it being partially repaired, its doors were again opened in a fortnight, in order that the actors and actresses, who, being deprived of their means of support, suffered most by the unhappy riot, might have a series of benefits. The first of these was given to Peg Woffington, who played in 'All For Love,' under the patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset. On this occasion the town, as if to

make reparation for its recent wrath, crowded once more to testify its appreciation of an old favourite who had become almost as a personal friend to her audiences ; and who, though she usually performed four times a week, had never disappointed them once in three winters by affected illnesses, as was the habit of other actresses of consequence. ' Yet,' says Victor, who gives this information, ' I have often seen her on the stage when she ought to have been in her bed.'

The paper which advertised her benefit contained likewise the following notice inserted by Sheridan : ' Mr. Sheridan, lately manager of the Theatre Royal, thinks it necessary to acquaint the public that he has entirely quitted the stage, and will be no more concerned in the direction of it. He has lent the house to the performers during their benefits without any emolument to himself. He hoped to have been able before this time to have laid before the public a full vindication of his conduct, but a near domestic concern has so far affected him for some days past that it was impossible for him to give that attention to the subject which it required. He hopes, however, to have it published soon, and in the mean time earnestly entreats of all candid and impartial persons that they will not give ear

to the many stories and falsehoods which are industriously propagated to his prejudice. He makes no doubt of convincing all (who are to be convinced) that he has done nothing but what he ought to have done, and that he could not have acted otherwise consistent with the character of a good citizen or a good manager.'

He therefore let the theatre to his treasurer, Victor, and took his farewell of the stage in a pamphlet addressed to the town. Peg Woffington, with that generosity which endeared her to all, tarried to take part in the benefits of her fellow-players; then bidding goodbye for the last time, though she knew it not, to her native city, she crossed the Channel, and turned her face towards the English capital once more. Again she engaged with Rich, and made her reappearance at Covent Garden Theatre on the 22d of September, 1754, in the character of Maria in 'The Nonjuror;' when 'she drew a great house, was welcomed with great applause, and played the part as well as it could be played.' At this theatre she 'continued a delighting favourite,' says John Galt, 'until she left the stage.' This event happened three years later.



## CHAPTER III.

Diversions of the Polite World. — My Lady Coventry. — ‘A Little Lively sort of Fairy.’ — Masquerade at Somerset House. — The Prince with the Pink Eyes. — Juliet Disconcerted. — The Player and the Peeress. — A Scotch Venus. — Lady Albemarle’s Dream. — Poor Lord Montford. — General Braddock and Mrs. Upton. — Entertainments Abound. — Jack Spencer’s Wedding.

**D**URING these years many strange things happened in the world which surrounded the actress. In London town, diversion continued to be cultivated as an art, and the brilliant current of fashionable life swept on untroubled even by the breath of political faction. So untroubled, indeed, that when the graver members of society were concerned as to whether Mr. Pitt was in or out of the ministry, Mr. Chute met Dick Edgecumbe, a man of parts, who fluttered butterfly-like in the drawing-rooms of the great, and moth-like in the gambling-rooms of the clubs, where he sometimes burnt his wings, and asked him if he knew whether Mr. Pitt was out.

‘Yes,’ replied Edgecumbe.



JOHN CHUTE.



‘Why, how do you know?’ asked his friend.

‘Because,’ answered he, ‘I called at his door just now, and his porter told me so.’

Never, it seemed, had there been such doings, never such gossamer-like gossip floating in the summer atmosphere of the world of fashion. ‘Come to town,’ writes my Lady Hervey to a friend, in the third month of the year 1756, ‘and you will hear of ladies of quality who uphold footmen in insulting gentlemen, and of ladies who steal not only hearts, but gold boxes. In short, you will see and hear of every kind of luxury and of vice, without delicacy, taste, or pleasure.’ In the brilliant circles of fashionable life Lady Coventry was the observed of all observers, and a thousand stories were told about her and her grave young lord, whom she called her ‘dear Cov.’ Mrs. Piozzi, speaking of the countess, whom she styles ‘the true perfection of female beauty,’ says when she went to the playhouse ‘she was received with repeated bursts of applause by the pit and galleries.’ Mrs. Delany, at this time staying in London likewise, gives us a description, curious to read, of the countess, now in the very heyday of her beauty. ‘Yesterday after chapel,’ she writes from Whitehall, ‘the Duchess (of Portsmouth)

brought home Lady Coventry to feast me, and *a feast she was*. She is a fine figure, and vastly handsome, notwithstanding a silly look sometimes about her mouth; she has a thousand airs, but with a sort of innocence that diverts one. Her dress was a black-silk sack, made for a large hoop, which she wore without any, and it trailed a yard on the ground; she had on a cobweb-laced handkerchief, a pink satin long cloke, lined with ermine mixed with squirrel-skins; on her head a French cap that just covered the top of her head, and stood in the form of a butterfly with its wings not quite extended, frilled sort of lappets crossed under her chin, and tied with pink and green ribbon a head-dress that would have charmed a *shepherd*. She has a thousand dimples and prettiness in her cheeks, her eyes a little drooping at the corners, but fine for all that.'

When the beauty was bidden to the great masquerade at Somerset House, 'about which all the world of London is wild,' she must invite George Selwyn, who was loved well by all the world in general and the countess in particular, to see her fine dress for the occasion, which was black covered all over with silver spots the size of a shilling. 'La,' said the wit, 'you will be change for a guinea.' Then when she

went to Somerset House, who was there but Lady Carysfort's sister, Miss Allen, 'a little lively sort of a fairy,' who was not conversant with the great world, and had not yet been to court, and had not seen my Lady Coventry before. So at the close of the night, when people began to unmask, Miss Allen, still keeping her face covered, went up to the countess, and, said she, 'I have indeed heard a great deal of this lady's beauty, but it surpasses all I have expected.'

'What!' said my lady, in great surprise, 'have you never seen me before?'

Standing close by was a young man with a florid face, bunches of white eyebrows, and pink lids, who, being equally astonished, asked Miss Allen, 'Are you not an Englishwoman?'

Then answered this lively sort of fairy, 'I don't know whether I may be called an Englishwoman, but I am just come from New York upon the fame of this lady, whose beauty is talked of far and near, and I think I came for a very good purpose.'

Lady Coventry marched off in high satisfaction; but the pink-lidded young man lingered, as young men will, and the young lady made him many witty speeches, as young ladies will — when they can.

‘Come,’ said he, at last, ‘I must see who has entertained me so well,’ and he made her sit down.

‘Hands off,’ said she, archly enough — she was a gay young thing. ‘You know,’ she added, ‘that is impertinent.’ But though her words reproved him, her eyes shone brightly through her satin mask. Then Lady Carysfort beckoned her to approach.

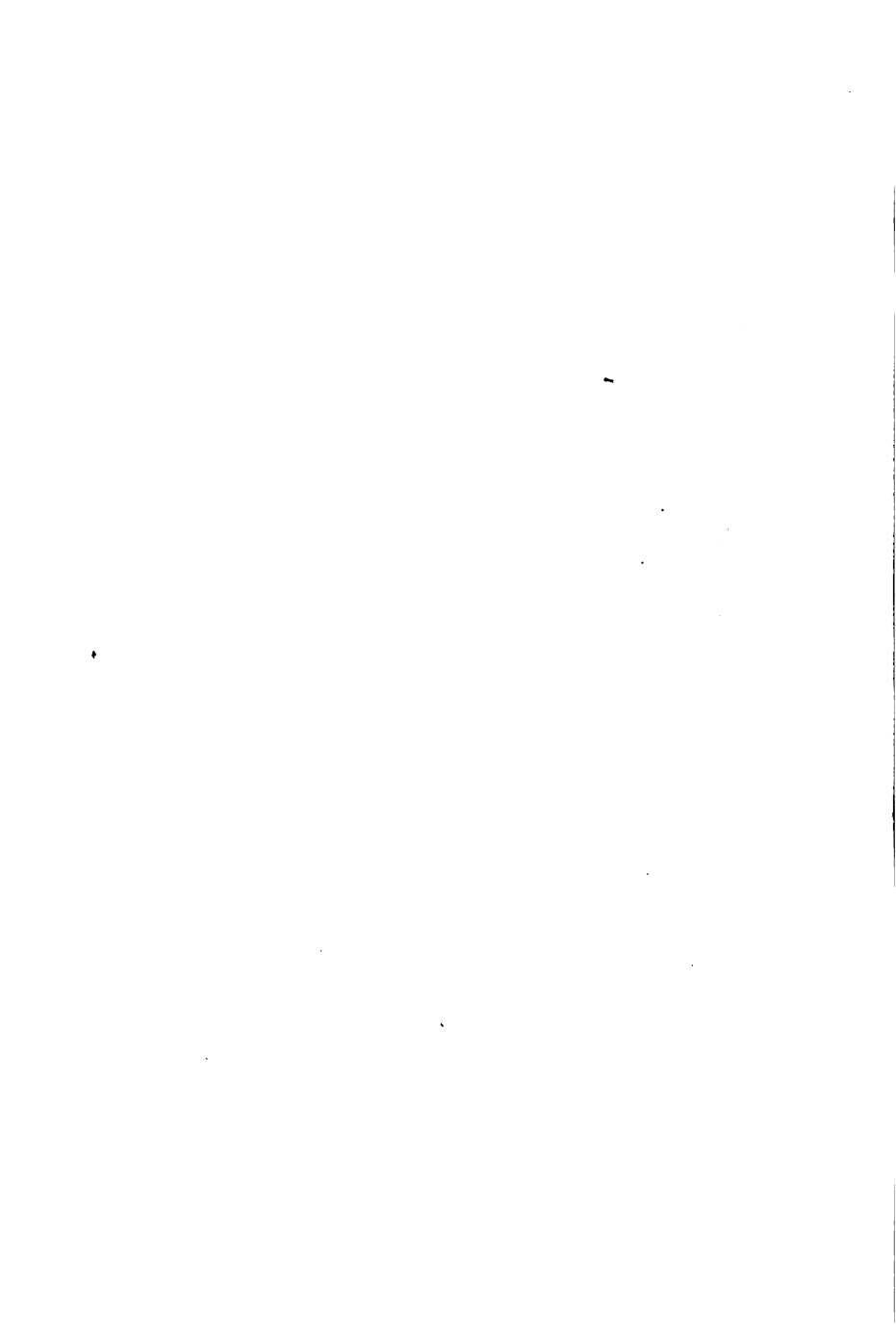
‘Do you know,’ she whispered, ‘it is Prince Edward you are talking to?’

Whereon the fairy, unlike her ariel sisters, was covered with vast confusion; but being a fairy, she was cute, and went back to the prince’s side, and pretended she did not know who he was, and treated him as she had done before, until an opportunity offered, when she slipped away from him. Presently she sat down in a corner where she believed herself unseen, and took off her mask to cool her face. But the beautiful young prince had watched the fairy from under his pink lids all the while, and now came and seated himself beside her, and took her hand in his very gently, and asked, thinking more of tarts than of hearts at that moment, if she knew her way to the room where coffee was served. She replied she did not, when he offered to conduct her thither, and so they set



EDWARD DUKE OF YORK.





off to seek their supper, through the dense forest of humanity, meeting many adventures by the way, till at last they came to their journey's end, and there was a supper-table laid as if by magic, glittering with silver and with gold that reflected a vast number of star-like lights, and crowded with strange, fragile flowers. The prince helped the fairy to numerous dishes, and to wines sparkling in many-coloured glasses, and they enjoyed themselves vastly, until the clock struck one, when an elderly fairy — for sure such she must have been, as she called herself the young fairy's mother — came up and carried her away in a great rumbling coach, leaving the beautiful young prince with the pink lids disconsolate.

Among others, George Anne Bellamy has a story to tell of my Lady Coventry, though it is not an over-pleasant one. When Maria Gunning came over from Ireland, she remembered the friendly office which the Bellamy had formerly done her family, and again besought other favours at the actress's hands. Indeed, it was only a couple of days before her marriage that she had paid the player a visit concerning a little pecuniary business, which resulted in George Anne accepting a note-of-hand for cash received. Time passed, Maria Gunning became Countess

of Coventry; but Miss Bellamy saw her no more till one night when the actress was playing Juliet in Covent Garden to a great house, on which occasion the beauty sat in a stage box in company with some other ladies of the highest distinction. During the first part of the play all went well; but when the tragic moment arrived in which the love-sick Juliet is about to drink the poisoned draught, a loud laugh, proceeding from her ladyship's box, and indeed, for the matter of that, from her ladyship's lips, fell upon the silent house. So disconcerted was Juliet that not only was she unable to drink the poisoned draught, but she was likewise rendered incapable of proceeding with her part; she therefore advanced to the footlights and begged permission to retire until she should be able to recover herself. The audience was incensed, and insisted on the ladies quitting the play-house; mortified by which, the countess said to a gentleman in a neighbouring box, who reproached her, that since she had witnessed the Cibber as Juliet, she could not bear to see the Bellamy play that part. However, Lord Eglington, who was in the countess's company at the time, subsequently coming round to the green room to apologise, assured the blue-eyed Bellamy that no offence had been meant to her;

but that the laugh Lady Coventry 'had broke out into had been involuntary, and had been excited by her twirling an orange upon her finger, and some ridiculous thing that was said upon the occasion.' Whatever caused the laughter Miss Bellamy was highly incensed, and next morning dispatched her house-steward with the note-of-hand Lady Coventry had given her a few days previous to her marriage, bidding him to demand immediate payment of it from her ladyship. When the man reached Lady Coventry's house, he was informed her ladyship was taking the air on horseback, when it was his pleasure to wait her return. Then he presented her with the note-of-hand.

'What,' quoth she, 'is it from Miss Bellamy the actress?'

To which the man replied it was; upon which her ladyship's beautiful countenance flushed indignantly.

'If she is impertinent,' said the countess, 'I will have her hissed off the stage.'

On this the man made bold to say that 'continuing on the stage was a matter of indifference to his mistress; but if she chose to perform, it was not in her ladyship's power to prevent it.' Having made which remark, he speedily left the house; but he was soon overtaken by a messen-

ger, who said the money would be shortly sent — a promise never fulfilled.

The second of the Gunnings, the beautiful Betty, otherwise Elizabeth Duchess of Hamilton, had not yet an opportunity of proving her talent for farther matrimonial alliances with ducal houses ; but lived in peaceful retirement, giving the world sons destined to become dukes. But another Scotch duchess was at this time affording much diversion to her contemporaries. This was her Grace of Gordon, 'who looks like a raw-boned Scotch metaphysician, who has got a red face by drinking water.' One day at a court drawing-room the duchess — now a widow of two years' standing — met Stanislaus King of Poland ; she did not speak to him, but she perceived he was a very fine man, and being a woman of prompt action, she sent one of the foreign ministers next day to invite his Majesty to dine with her. Stanislaus went. The moment he entered her Grace's drawing-room, her two little sons, dressed as nearly as decency would permit like Cupids, and equipped with bows and arrows, jumped forward and shot at him. Their aims were not of the best, and one of the arrows was so far from striking his heart that it almost put out his eye, and prevented him seeing the red-skinned Scotch Venus



ELIZABETH GUNNING.



reclining in as graceful a repose as her raw bones would permit. The king, having his sight left him by the Cupids, was not smitten by such loveliness as she displayed, and her Grace was subsequently content with becoming the wife of Colonel Saates Morris.

Foreigners were indeed the fashion at this time in London society, always provided they were not Germans, of which there was ever a plentiful supply at court. 'Have you heard of a Countess Chamfelt, a Bohemian, rich and hideous, who is arrived here, and is under the protection of Lady Caroline Petersham?' writes Horace Walpole to George Montagu. 'She has a great facility for languages, and has already learned "damn you" and "kiss me." I beg her pardon, — I believe she never uses the former but upon the miscarriage of the latter; in short, as Doddington says, she has the honour of performing at most courts in Europe.' The same worthy authority tells us a story of another foreigner which admirably illustrates the manners of the times. 'There is a young Frenchman here,' he writes to Richard Bentley, 'called Monsieur Herault. Lady Harrington carried him and his governor to sup with her and Miss Ashe at a tavern t'other night. I have long said that the French were relapsed into bar-



barity, and quite ignorant of the world. You shall judge : in the first place, the young man was bashful ; in the next, the governor, so ignorant as not to have heard of women of fashion carrying men to a tavern, thought it incumbent on him to do the honours for his pupil, who was as modest and as much in a state of nature as the ladies themselves, and hazarded some familiarities with Lady Harrington. The consequence was that the next morning she sent a card to both, to desire they would not come to her ball that evening, to which she had invited them, and to beg the favour of them never to come to the house again.'

But all such gossip as this gave place to the wonderful story concerning Lady Albemarle, daughter of Charles fifth duke of Richmond, who two nights together dreamt she saw and took leave of her lord ; and the dream was put in the newspapers, and talked of by all the town, and furnished the chief subject in the correspondence dated December, 1754. The most graphic narration of the story comes from Walpole's pen. Lord Albemarle died suddenly at Paris, from which gay city an express containing the news was sent to his son, Lord Bury, then at Windsor, who came to town

betimes, and found his mother and sisters at breakfast. Walpole shall tell the rest.

“ “ Lord, child ! ” said my Lady Albemarle, “ what brings you here to town so early ? ”

‘ He said he had been sent for.

‘ Says she, “ You are not well ? ”

“ “ Yes,” replied Lord Bury, “ I am, but a little flustered with something I have heard.”

“ “ Let me feel your pulse,” said Lady Albemarle. “ Oh ! ” continued she, “ your father is dead ! ”

“ “ Lord, madam ! ” said Lord Bury, “ how could that come into your head ? I should rather have imagined that you would have thought it was my poor brother William ” (who is just gone to Lisbon for his health).

“ “ No,” said my Lady Albemarle, “ I know it is your father ; I dreamt last night that he was dead and came to take leave of me ! ” and immediately swooned.

‘ I do believe,’ adds Walpole, ‘ the dream happened, and happened right among the millions of dreams that do not hit.’ When Lady Temple tells the story, she adds that my Lady Albemarle saw her lord all dressed in white. ‘ The same thing,’ she adds, ‘ happened before the Duke of Richmond’s death, and often has happened before the death of any of her family.’

Then there was a curious story, which was likewise in the papers, of another dream which was realised in a strange manner. One Mr. Dalker, it was recounted, visited an ancient mansion situated in the country, where among other things of interest, he saw the figure of a marble lion, represented as open-mouthed and enraged. 'There 's my enemy,' said the poor man. 'I have more than once dreamed that I should owe my death to a lion.' And so saying, and smiling in scorn as he spoke, he thrust his arm into the lion's mouth. But within was an iron spike, which severely lacerated his hand, and a mortification ensuing, he died in consequence. Then at the same time occurred Lord Montford's death, a more extraordinary story yet. My lord, who was High Steward of the town of Cambridge, was a good-natured and agreeable man enough, with the most compendious understanding. In the first month of the year 1755, he consulted several persons on the easiest method of ending life. Next, he invited a company to dinner for the day after his death, and ordered a supper at White's, where he supped likewise the night before. In the midst of this, whilst wine and wit flowed freely, Lord Robert Bertie drank to him a happy new year ; he suddenly clapped his hands to his eyes.

Next day he sent for his lawyer, as Lady Hervey tells us in her interesting letters, made his will, and had it read over three times, that there might be no flaw or room for dispute. Afterwards he asked the lawyer if it would stand good though a man were to shoot himself, who assured him it would ; on which his lordship went into his bed-room and shot himself. 'These things,' writes my Lady Hervey, 'are what our countrymen attribute to more reflection, solid reasoning, and greater resolution than other people are masters of ; I impute them to more phlegmatic constitutions, thicker and more uncertain blood, and lower spirits,—natural effects of our climate on our bodies, and therefore a physical evil, not a moral excellence. I have as yet heard no reason assigned for this event but that tedium vitæ which is so frequent in this country. Happy shall I be when I return to that country where the air, the people, and the manner of living dispose one to cheerfulness, and to enjoy life, not destroy it.'

My Lord Montford's tragic death did not, however, make much impression on some of his friends. Lord Lincoln, whom George II. declared was the handsomest man in England, when he heard the news, said, with an air of vast philosophy, 'Well, I am sorry for poor

Montford ; but it is the part of a wise man to make the best of every misfortune, — I shall now have the best cook in England.' This remark was made before Lord Anson, who likewise loved the things of this earth properly cooked. The late earl's *chef* would not, however, promise to bestow his service on my Lord Lincoln till he knew if the present earl would retain him. When it was decided that he would not, Lord Lincoln proposed that he should enter into his service ; but the great *chef* was already engaged by my Lord Anson. Great was the quarrel that ensued between these noble gentlemen concerning a cook ; so great that at one time it was considered blood could alone atone for this breach of friendship and deplorable selfishness. The *chef* was, however, spared the honour of having a duel fought for his sake. A more lively story than this soon amused the town, the hero of which was General Braddock, the heroine Mrs. Upton. The lady loved him so well that she parted with all her pin-money to him ; the gallant man considered it but a due reward for his tenderness, and yet craved for more. Pressing her one day for further supplies, she pulled out her purse to show him she had but twelve or fourteen shillings left. He twitched it from her. ' Let me see,' said the

gallant man, and sure enough he found five guineas tied up at the other end ; possessing himself of which, he flung back the empty purse in her face. ' Did you mean to cheat me ? ' he said indignantly, and he went out of the house ; and Mrs. Upton saw her lover no more. The town was, however, much diverted by her loss.

All through the fashionable seasons of these years the great houses entertained, — suppers, breakfasts, dinners, and assemblies continually kept the polite part of the town in motion. My Lady Norfolk's receptions were distinguished by their special magnificence and the vast crowds that flocked to them. It was at one of these that Charles Townshend, who had a reputation for wit and many other things, heard somebody say that my Lady Falmouth, who had a great many diamonds on, had a very fine stomach. ' By Gad,' said he, ' my lord has a better.' My Lady Norfolk threw wide the doors of all her rooms on these occasions, when, according to one of the gossips who attended them, ' the tapestry, the embroidered bed, the illuminations, the glasses, the lightness and novelty of the ornaments and the ceilings, were pronounced delightful.' Then my Lady Lincoln, whose husband was Auditor of the Exchequer, gave vast assemblies in the Exchequer House, when

Westminster Hall was illuminated for chairs, the passage from it hung with green baize and coloured lamps, and the cloisters ornamented with volterra vases, — the whole presenting the prettiest scene in the world. 'Gaiety of all kinds reigns here at 'present,' writes Lady Hervey in 1755. 'Balls, masquerades, and parties for play, and suppers abound so much that not only each night furnishes one, but many nights produce two or three. That at Lord Granville's has made a very great match. Mr. Spencer there fell in love with one of the daughters of Sir Cecil Bishop, who has a great many children and a small estate.'

This merry gentleman was the son of the Honourable Jack Spencer, the favourite grandson of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough. Having disinherited, to the utmost of her power, his eldest brother, Charles Duke of Marlborough, she had made a settlement of a very great estate upon the Honourable Jack and his sons, which they were to forfeit if any of them should ever accept any employment, military or civil, or any pension from any king or queen of the realm. 'This, I think,' the remarkable woman wrote when she had made her will, 'ought to please everybody; for it will secure my heirs in being very considerable men. None of them can

put on a fool's coat, and take posts from soldiers of experience and service, who never did anything but kill pheasants and partridges.' The fortune of nigh £30,000 a year, which she left the Honourable Jack, did not help by any means to prolong his life ; for he died at the age of six and thirty, ' because,' says Horace Walpole, briefly, ' he would not be abridged of those invaluable blessings of an English subject, — brandy, small beer, and tobacco.'

His son, whom Lady Hervey mentions, and who afterwards became first Earl Spencer, did not marry the beautiful Miss Bishop, but rather Miss Poyntz, whose nuptial festivals, which took place in December, 1755, caused much amusement to the town. ' One has heard of nothing for some time past,' writes Lady Hervey, ' but the magnificence, or rather the silly, vain profusion on account of Mr. Spencer's wedding ; and what is more extraordinary, is that it is quite disagreeable to both the young people, and entirely the effect of the vanity and folly of Lady Cowper, Mr. Spencer's mother. They came to town from Althorp, where they were married, with three coaches and six horses, and two hundred horsemen. The villages through which they passed were put into the greatest consternation ; some of the poor people shut



themselves up in their houses and cottages, barricading themselves up as well as they could. Those who were more resolute or more desperate armed themselves with pitchforks, spits, and spades ; all crying out it was the *invasion* which was come ; and to be sure, by the coaches and six horses, both the Pretender and King of France were come too. In short, great was the alarm, and happy they were when this formidable cavalcade passed by without setting fire to the habitations or murdering the inhabitants.'

Then when the bride and bridegroom came to town, they were entertained with routs and assemblies, and in return gave entertainments remarkable for their vast displays of splendour. Then there were great suppers at my Lord Hertford's, where all the world of fashion was duly bidden, and where the king's mistress, my Lady Yarmouth, ' who loved nothing so much as cramming,' enjoyed herself to such an extent that she was unable to join in the minuet, in which Lady Rochford made so graceful a figure. This was indeed a right merry time. In every quarter of the town during the fashionable seasons fiddles sounded, tapers blazed, and courtly figures glided over waxed floors.

## CHAPTER IV.

Another Side of London Life. — Men of Letters. — The Poverty of Poets. — The Ingenious Samuel Boyse. — His Wretched Life and Miserable Death. — Picture of a Poet. — Richard Savage. — A Man of Melancholy Aspect. — A Noble Patron. — An Author to be Let. — The Volunteer Laureate. — Striving to Live. — Life in Bristol. — Death in a Prison.

THERE is another side to this sparkling, vivacious London life, more interesting, if sorrow fraught, glimpses of which we catch in the careers of various men of letters of this period. Up and down Fleet Street and the Strand, thin-figured, round-shouldered, haggard-faced men pass and repass ; the pockets of their threadbare coats filled with manuscripts, poems for Mr. Cave's 'Gentleman's Magazine,' paragraphs for Robert Dodsley's 'Morning Chronicle,' pamphlets for Mr. John Newbery's press, — all of which have been conceived in some miserable garret, penned in a coffee-house box, or scrawled at midnight on a tavern table.

Though the town at this time could boast a full supply of magazines, reviews, and journals,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A full and curious list of which is given in Nichol's 'Literary Anecdotes,' vol. iv., p. 39.

yet literature was at a low ebb, and the life of the Grub-Street<sup>1</sup> hack was one of need and sore privation. 'I have a reluctance to think of living among the facetious barbarians of London,' writes David Hume from Paris. 'Letters are there held in no honour. The taste for literature is neither decayed nor depraved here, as with the barbarians who inhabit the banks of the Thames.' And Horace Walpole tells a friend that he 'shuns authors, and would never,' says he, 'be one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company.' The nobility preferred the society of gamesters, fiddlers, and buffoons to that of men of letters; whilst the middle class, ever following in the wake of the greater current, treated writers, by profession, with a contempt which it must be confessed their conduct oftentimes deserved.

It is true that Pope had been lifted to independence by powerful patronage, and could afford to sneer in many a bitter line at the Grub-Street scribblers; that Gay, concerning whom a king and a duchess had wrangled at a drawing-room in St. James's, was likewise protected

<sup>1</sup> Grub Street, according to Johnson, was 'the name of a street in London much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub Street.'

by the great ; that Young had been pensioned by Sir Robert Walpole ; but Fielding, after working arduously as a dramatist, novelist, and hack-writer for the journals of the day, quitted England, worn out in health, and wrecked in fortune, to die in exile ; Samuel Richardson alone saved himself from want by keeping shop ; both Savage and Boyse starved ; Johnson was cast into a sponging-house ; Thomson wanted shoes, and would have wanted bread, but for a player's charity ;<sup>1</sup> Collins died neglected and mad ; and Smollett, after long years spent in translating, compiling, reviewing, dramatising, and novel-writing for a bare subsistence, cried out in bitterness against ' the incredible labour and chagrin ' of his life. To be a hack-

<sup>1</sup> John Galt, in his 'Lives of the Players' says that Quin, ' hearing Thomson, the poet of the "Seasons," was confined in a sponging-house for a debt of about seventy pounds, he repaired to the place. Thomson was a good deal disconcerted at seeing him, and the more so as Quin told him he had come to sup with him, and that as he supposed it would have been inconvenient to have had the supper dressed at the place they were in, he had ordered it from an adjacent tavern, and as a prelude half a dozen of claret was introduced. Supper being over, Quin said, " It is time now we should balance accounts. The pleasure I have had in perusing your works, I cannot estimate at less than a hundred pounds, and I insist on now acquitting the debt." On saying this, he put down a note, and took his leave without waiting for a reply.'

writer was indeed a sorry mortal, to be a poet was a man acquainted with wretchedness. 'All that is squalid and miserable,' writes Lord Macaulay, speaking of this period, 'might now be summed up in the word poet. That word denoted a creature dressed like a scarecrow, familiar with compters and sponging-houses, and perfectly qualified to decide on the comparative merits of the Common Side in the King's Bench prison, and of Mount Scoundrel in the Fleet. Even the poorest pitied him; and they might well pity him. For if their condition was equally abject, their aspirations were not equally high, nor their sense of insult equally acute. To lodge in a garret up four pair of stairs, to dine in a cellar among footmen out of place, to translate ten hours a day for the wages of a ditcher, to be hunted by bailiffs from one haunt of beggary and pestilence to another, from Grub Street to St. George's Fields, and from St. George's Fields to the alleys behind St. Martin's Church, to sleep on a bulk in June, and amidst the ashes of a glass-house in December, to die in a hospital and to be buried in a parish vault, was the fate of more than one writer, who, if he had lived in our time, would have found encouragement and munificence in Albemarle Street or in Paternoster Row.'

Of such was Samuel Boyse, 'well known by his ingenious productions,' whose sad, improvident course was typical of his class. The son of 'a learned, pious, and useful divine,' he had by some ill chance strayed into the perilous paths of literature, and professed himself a poet. His genius gave such early promise that it raised him up many friends, and would have rendered his name illustrious, but that his natural indolence and self-indulgence lowered him, until he grew to be that most miserable thing, a Grub-Street scribbler. As such he became, as a biographer mildly puts it, 'a man of no parts whatever, — his political creed being influenced by his necessities.' In other words, his talents were for sale to the politician desiring an anonymous scourge for his opponent, to the dependent choosing to flatter his patron. Now we find him dedicating an ode entitled 'The Olive' to Sir Robert Walpole, for which he received ten guineas; then dedicating a volume of poems to the Countess of Eglington, a lady of many accomplishments; and again writing an elegant elegy on the death of the Viscountess Stormount, called 'The Tears of the Muses,' — for her ladyship, being the patroness of men of wit, and possessing a taste in the sciences, was one for whose loss the mystic nine

were supposed to weep. The guineas which these and other effusions of a like kind afforded him, brought him but little benefit. Whilst they lasted, he of course forsook the Irish ordinary in Shoe Lane, or the yet more squalid eating-house in Porridge Island, where he and his fellows, when quite penniless, would stand to sniff the scent of that which they might not enjoy, and now hastened to the 'Rose and Crown' ordinary close by Covent Garden, there to partake of a dainty supper and drink rare wines, the cost of which left him penniless on the morrow. Then came letters of supplication to persons of distinction, — 'a freedom,' says one of his contemporaries, 'to which he was entitled by the power of his genius;' and odes, the object of which was to gain a guinea or two from those they flattered. When such failed, the poet would turn to work, and pen rhymes for the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' the proprietor of which paid him by the hundred lines, 'which, after a while, he wanted to make what is called the long hundred,' or write a history for the same publisher, for which he was paid half a guinea a week, — his labour including not only the composition of 'a work not destitute of merit,' but proof-correcting likewise.

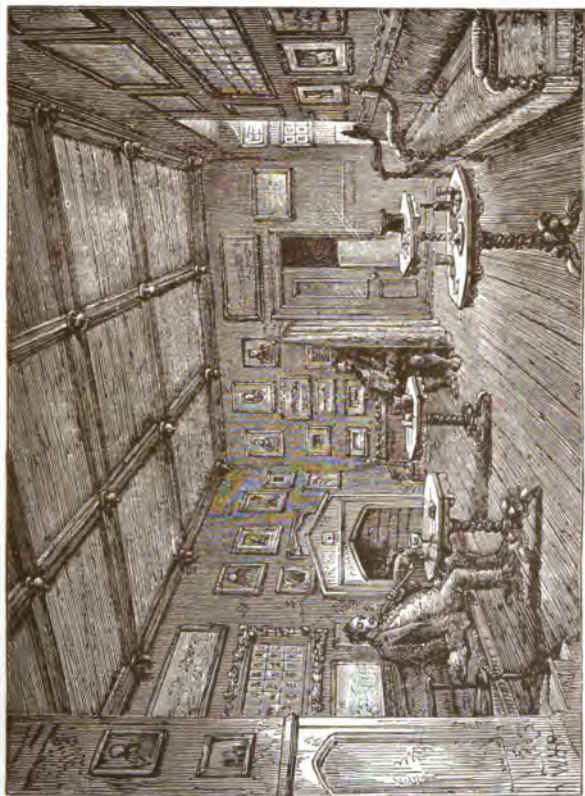
This lack of generosity on the part of Mr.

Edward Cave somewhat prepares us for the miserable picture which Shiels has given us of the poor poet. Shiels was himself a child of the Muses, — sad to say, an unsuccessful child, as may be gathered from the fact that when he wrote his ‘Lives of the Poets,’ his publisher, to secure their sale, paid Theo Cibber, then a prisoner for debt, the sum of ten guineas for allowing his name to be affixed to the title-page as the author. Shiels, in speaking of Boyse, tells us his misery was extreme. ‘He had not,’ he writes, ‘a shirt, a coat, or any kind of apparel to put on; the sheets in which he lay were carried to the pawnbrokers, and he was obliged to be confined to bed with no other covering than a blanket. He had little support but what he got by writing letters to his friends in the most abject style. Whoever had seen him in this study must have thought the object singular enough. He sat up in bed with the blanket wrapped about him, through which he had cut a hole large enough to admit his arm, and placing the paper upon his knee, scribbled in the best manner he could the verses he was obliged to make. Whatever he got by these or any of his begging letters was but just sufficient for the preservation of life. And perhaps he would have remained much longer in this distressful



state, had not a compassionate gentleman, upon hearing the circumstances, ordered his clothes to be taken out of pawn.'

This compassionate gentleman was Samuel Johnson, who, being a contributor to the same magazine, had become acquainted with the poor poet. Hearing now of his distress, and remembering the days when he 'subsisted himself for a considerable space of time upon the scanty pittance of fourpence halfpenny per day,' and had eaten his dinner at the ordinary at St. John's Gate behind a screen, because he was ashamed of his ragged clothes, Johnson collected a sum of money to redeem such articles of attire for the distressed poet as would enable him to venture forth among his more prosaic fellow-creatures with due deference to a sense of what they termed decency. The sum necessary for this laudable purpose was collected by sixpences, 'at a time when to me,' Johnson afterwards remarked, 'sixpence was a serious consideration.' This charity availed the poet little, for the clothes were soon again in the possession of the pawnbroker; and for the future, according to Shiels, 'whenever his distresses so pressed him as to induce him to dispose of his shirt, he fell upon an artificial method of supplying one. He cut some white



COFFEE-ROOM AT ST. JOHN'S GATE.



paper in slips, which he tied round his wrists, and in the same way supplied his neck. In this manner he frequently appeared abroad, with the additional inconvenience of want of breeches.' The charming simplicity of this costume, which in Arcadia would have been regarded as superfluous, was considered insufficient in the vicinity of Fleet Street. 'He was once sent for in a hurry to the house of a printer who had employed him to write a poem for his magazine,' writes Shiels. 'Boyse then was without breeches or waistcoat, but was yet possessed of a coat, which he threw upon him, and in this ridiculous manner went to the printer's house, where he found several women, whom his extraordinary appearance obliged immediately to retire.'

His shifts to obtain money were indeed pitiful. He sometimes ordered his wife — for he had married when barely eighteen — to inform his friends he was just expiring; by which artifice he worked on their compassion, though he frequently excited their anger when next day they, by accident, encountered him whom they had believed was at that moment on the point of death. Yet this man, who was reduced to such sad straits, was the writer of several charming poems, one of which, 'The Deity,' Fielding speaks of as a 'very noble composition;' an

opinion Hervey, author of 'The Meditations,' endorses by speaking of it as 'very beautiful, sublime, and instructive; quite poetical, truly evangelical, and admirably fitted to delight and comfort the heart.' Moreover, he laboured hard. 'I have all last summer,' he writes in 1741, 'been employed by Mr. Cave in French translations; a province highly agreeable to me, and the most profitable business stirring. I have been since last September almost constantly with Dr. Douglas, in the slavish work of index making, *alias* word catching, and am only now interrupted by his "Osteology," which takes up his whole attention. I have the prospect of having a new translation from the French in a few days; but booksellers are so undistinguishing, and authors, or rather scribblers, so plenty, that learning, unless supported, bids fair to starve between them. I hope the best, and would endeavour, as far as I could, to support a good character in a literary way.'

Yet he suffered from hunger and nakedness, and to complete the history of his miseries, was cast into a sponging-house, from whence he cries out to Cave, his employer, for help. 'I am every moment,' writes the poor poet, 'threatened to be turned out here, because I have not money to pay for my bed two nights past, which

Sir  
I lent to Mr Oswald for a first  
Volume of Jacobite Works,  
and had obtained an Abridgement  
of his life in order to put it in  
a Magazine; but lost it a Day  
after, and therefore must defer it till the  
October Magazine You mention not Barnet  
Knight of Glasgow (Christian name); which  
I should choose to do as soon as

Sir  
your humble Servant  
Edw. Cave

St John's Gate 22 7<sup>r</sup> 1747





is usually paid beforehand ; and I am loth to go into the compter till I can see if my affairs can possibly be made up. I hope, therefore, you will have the humanity to send me half a guinea for support, till I finish your papers in my hands. I humbly entreat your answer, having not tasted anything since Tuesday evening I came here ; and my coat will be taken off my back for the charge of the bed, so that I must go into the prison naked, which is too shocking for me to think of.'

He was soon released, and was in ' the enjoyment of serene melancholy ; ' for his spouse — who, by the way, had during life entertained very liberal views regarding the duties pertaining to matrimony — had now gone to that bourne from whence wives never return, leaving the poet to nurse his sorrows and a pet dog, which he was wont to carry in his arms because it gave him the air of a man of taste, and which he decorated with a piece of black ribbon as expressive of the loss which both he and the puppy sustained for their late mistress. Boyse died in the year 1749, at the age of fifty-one. Mr. Giles, described as ' a late collector of poems,' says he was found dead in his bed in a wretched garret in Whitefriars, with the pen in his hand in the act of writing ; but Johnson assured Mr.



Nichols that during a fit of intoxication he was run over by a coach ; whilst Mr. Francis Stewart declared he was attacked in Westminster by two or three soldiers, who not only robbed him, but used him so barbarously that he died from the effects. In any case, his life ended in misery, and a pauper's grave received his body.

A scarcely less miserable poet was Savage, a man of melancholy aspect, of a thin habit of body, with a voice tremulous and mournful, and manners elegant and graceful. He was the son of Anne Countess of Macclesfield, unlawfully begotten by Earl Rivers ; his mother hated him from the hour of his birth, and persecuted him till that of his death. Bound 'prentice to a shoemaker in Holborn, he might have lived a respectable tradesman, if accident had not made known to him the secret of his birth, by means of some papers left in the possession of an old nurse ; or had not the Muses discovered to him the fact that he was richly dowered with the fatal gift of song. Spurned by the woman who bore him, and through her machinations left penniless by his adulterous father, he spent his time, as Johnson writes, 'in mean expedients and tormenting suspense, living for the greatest part in the fear of prosecutions from his credi-

In my first Epistle, I have introduced  
my Remarks on our Histories as follows.

But of all plagues, w<sup>th</sup> which dull prose is curst,  
None from y<sup>t</sup> false Historian comes y<sup>t</sup> worst.  
Is there of Genius one never partial seen,  
Thro' Flattery, thro' Affection, or thro' spleen;  
Whose aim quite honest, whose discernment clear,  
To truth ~~gaze~~ <sup>stares</sup>, twist contending parties, steer;  
Nor ~~spoke~~ <sup>speaks</sup> on this, or that, in plate, or Church?  
Lives such ~~as~~ a Man? there does — read candid Birch!

While worthy men, like his, &c R: Savage

—



tors, and consequently skulking in obscure parts of the town, of which he was no stranger to the remotest corner.'

At such times it was his habit to lie in bed all day, getting up only when darkness came, and stealing out into the night to visit an acquaintance, sell a few verses he had written, and wander about in the enjoyment of that liberty which he might not enjoy by day; returning to his garret before morn and the bailiffs awoke. Occasionally, and in happier times, he lived in luxury at the tables of the great, whom the exercise of his talents, the fascination of his manners, and the sprightliness of his conversation delighted; until he disgusted them by his irregularities, when the wretched bohemian was turned from their doors in anger and disgrace, and was again reduced to the uttermost depths of hunger and despair.

One of the noble patrons who bore with his dissipated ways was my Lord Tyrconnel, an Irish peer. His lordship, upon the poet laying aside a design of exposing his guilty mother's cruelties, consented to receive him into his household, to treat him as one of his family, and, moreover, to allow him an income of two hundred a year. This, as his biographer states, was the golden part of the poet's life. 'For

a time he had no reason to complain of fortune ; his appearance was splendid, his expenses large, and his acquaintance extensive. He was courted by all who endeavoured to be thought men of genius, and caressed by all who valued themselves upon a refined taste. To admire Mr. Savage was a proof of discernment, and to be acquainted with him was a title to poetical reputation. His presence was sufficient to make any place of public entertainment popular ; and his approbation and example constituted the fashion ; so powerful is genius when it is invested with the glitter of affluence. Men willingly pay to fortune that regard which they owe to merit, and are pleased when they have an opportunity at once of gratifying their vanity and practising their duty.'

It was whilst under the protection of my Lord Tyrconnel, at a time when he fondly believed himself removed forever above the mean expedients of a hack-writer's existence, that he published a pamphlet called ' An Author to be Let ; being a proposal humbly addressed to the consideration of the knights, esquires, gentlemen, and other wonderful and weighty members of the Solid and Ancient Society of the Bathos, by their associate and well-wisher Iscariot Hackney.' This was written to satirise the Grub-

Street scribblers, of whom he had many bitter recollections. Johnson, in speaking of it, declares that in this pamphlet Savage has left 'exact observations on human life which would do honour to the greatest names.' That it was a mirror in which those satirised saw themselves reflected in a manner most true to Nature, was at once evident from the fact that several of them accused Savage of making use of their confidences for the purpose of holding them up to public scorn. No more forcible picture of the swarming tribe who contributed so much to the literature of the day—a race now forever, happily, extinct—who stung in pamphlets, flattered in odes, slandered in paragraphs, translated, plagiarised, compiled, and starved, can be given than by quoting a few passages from this pamphlet, now almost wholly unknown.

In the preface, he says, most of the scribblers are 'persons of a very low parentage, and without any pretence of merit, are aspiring to the rank of gentlemen. Thus they become all economists. Poverty is the consequence of all economy, and dirty tricks the consequence of their poverty. Though they are sad writers, they might have been good mechanics; and therefore, by endeavouring to shine in spheres

to which they are unequal, are guilty of depriving the public of many that might have been its useful members. Had not the great Mr. Dennis, the son of a saddler, better have been a common parish-crier than a poet or critic? Had it not been an honest and more decent livelihood for Mr. Norton (Daniel de Foe's son of love, by a lady who vended oysters) to have dealt in a fish-market than to be dealing out the dialects of Billingsgate and detraction in the "Flying Post"? Should not Dick Morley rather have been blacking shoes at the corners of streets (to which it is well known his industrious and more prudent younger brother submitted) than blackening reputations in the "Weekly Journal"? The blackening of the brush from the Japan pot is so useful and ornamental that it is frequently called honour; but the dash of Dick's pen, so often dipped in an ink-standish, is dirty and detrimental, consequently dishonour. So that Dick and his brother illustrate St. Paul's saying, "Some are made to honour, and some to dishonour." Had it not been more decent for Mr. Roome to have sung psalms, according to education, in an anabaptist meeting than to have been altering "The Jovial Crew," or "Merry Beggars" into a wicked imitation of the "Beggar's Opera"? When



MR. EDWARD MOORE.





Mrs. Haywood ceased to be a strolling actress, why might not the lady (though once a theatrical queen) have subsisted by turning washerwoman? Has not the fall of greatness been a frequent distress in all ages? She might have considered the sullied linen, growing white in her pretty red hands, as an emblem of her soul, were it well scoured by repentance for the sins of her youth; but she rather chose starving, by writing novels of intrigue to teach young heiresses the art of running away with fortune-hunters, and scandalising persons of the highest worth and distinction. When this lady, or these gentlemen, are asked why they abuse such and such persons, their answer is they are obliged to write for want of money, and to abuse for want of other subjects. Is want of money an excuse for picking pockets, or what is worse, taking away a man's good name? Is the poverty of Moore's genius an excuse for filching Pope's lines? And appears not the theft in his comedy as plain as if a cinder-wench should steal a gold watch, and afterwards wear it?'

So much for the preface, which could not at least be accused of ambiguity; then comes the autobiographical details of the career of *Iscariot Hackney*, the *Grub-Street* scribbler. Whilst a boy he developed a genius for mischief, carried

tales from one lad to another, and then to the master, to have them whipped; and always, when he committed a fault himself, laid the blame on another, — a sure prognostic of his future abilities as a politician. When he grew to be a youth, he hooted at any unfortunate, ill-dressed person in the street, if he looked like a gentleman, — a certain sign of his talents as a critic. As he grew to manhood, with a natural sourness of temper, a droll solemnity of countenance, and a dry manner of joking upon such accidents as fools who value themselves upon humanity would be apt to compassionate, he set up for a man of humour about town; and as he had, furthermore, a propensity to sneer upon all mankind, especially those who imagined they could oblige him, he became a writer. 'Soon after,' Iscariot says, painting a portrait in which several persons saw themselves respectively represented, 'I was employed by Curll to write a merry tale, the wit of which was its obscenity. This we agreed to palm upon the world for a posthumous piece of Mr. Prior. However, a certain lady, celebrated for certain liberties, had a curiosity to see the real author. Curll, on my promise that, if I had a present, he should go snacks, sent me to her. I was admitted whilst her ladyship was shifting; and on my

admittance, Mrs. Abigail was ordered to withdraw. What passed between us, a point of gallantry obliges me to conceal; but after some extraordinary civilities, I was dismissed with a purse of guineas, and a command to write a sequel to my tale. Upon this I turned out smart in dress, bit Curll of his share, and ran out most of my money in printing my works at my own cost. But some years after the varlet was revenged. He arrested me for several months' board, brought me back to my garret, and made me drudge on in my old dirty work. It was in his service that I wrote obscenity and profaneness under the names of Pope and Swift. Sometimes I was Mr. Gay, and at others, Theory Burnet or Addison. I abridged histories and travels, translated from the French what they never wrote, and was expert at finding out new titles for old books.

'When a notorious thief was hanged, I was the Plutarch to preserve his memory; and when a great man died, mine were his remains, and mine the account of his last will and testament . . . One of my books had the honour of being presented for a libel by the grand jury, and another was made a burnt offering by the hands of the common hangman. If an author writes a piece that has success in his own character, I

abuse him ; but if in a fictitious one, I endeavour to personate him, and write a second part to his work. . . . Rather than stand out of the play, I have penned panegyricks on Rich's pantomimes, and I am always listed by him to hiss the first night at any of the Drury Lane performances.

‘ I have an excellent knack at birthday odes, elegies, acrosticks, anagrams, prologues, recommendatory poems, rhymes for almanack makers, and witty distiches for the signs of country inns and ale-houses. When a man of quality is distinguished for a wit, or an encourager of it, I endeavour to strike him for a dedication. I have tried all means, but what folks call honest ones, for a livelihood. I offered my service for a secret spy to the State ; but had not credit enough even for that. When it was, indeed, very low with me, I printed proposals for a subscription to my works, received money, and gave receipts without any intention of delivering the book. . . . In short, I am a perfect town author ; I hate all mankind, yet am occasionally a mighty patriot. I am very poor, and owe my poverty to my merits, — that is, to my writings. I am as proud as I am poor ; yet what is seemingly a contradiction, I never stick at a mean action when my own interest is concerned. It is reckoned a villainous action to write a libel,



JONATHAN SWIFT, D.D.



but more so to father one on a person who neither wrote it nor approves of it ; now I own I never scruple to do both. When a man of figure, perhaps an ornament to his country, hath been cruelly aspersed in his lifetime, I love to revive the aspersion at his death. . . . Now, gentlemen, if you like me for a correspondent, my price is the price of a journalist, — a crown. You may find me in the morning at my lucubrations over a quartern pot in a Geneva shop in Clare Market. I generally dine with a brother bard at one of the little cook's shops near St. Martin's Church, and probably spend the evening with him at a night cellar in the Strand, where I shall be ready to enter into a treaty with you.'

The whole tribe of Grub-Street scribblers were incensed by the pamphlet, and great was their rejoicing when presently its author fell from his high estate ; or in other words, quarrelled with my Lord Tyrconnel, and was once more cast adrift upon the world. He had known hunger, and had been clad in rags, and he could not therefore bear with equanimity the fortune which had suddenly promoted him to fare sumptuously and dress in purple and fine linen. The reaction had been too great, and he soon learned to abuse the privileges extended to him. It was



his habit, Lord Tyrconnel alleged, to enter a tavern with various companies, and drink the rarest wines with great profusion, he not having a penny in his pocket to pay the reckoning withal. If his companions were willing to defray the cost, the matter ended peaceably ; but if they became refractory, and demanded that he should pay for his own liquor, his method of settlement was to take them to his own apartments in my lord's mansion, assume the government of the house, imperiously order the butler to set the best wines in the cellar before his guests, who drank 'till they forgot the respect due to the house in which they were entertained, indulged themselves in the utmost extravagance of merriment, practised the most licentious frolicks, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness.'

Moreover, Lord Tyrconnel avowed that, having allowed Savage the use of a valuable collection of books stamped with his own arms, he had the mortification to see them in a short time upon the stalls ; it being one of the poet's ways to pawn the volumes when he wanted the accommodation of a small sum. Johnson said that whoever was acquainted with Mr. Savage easily credited both these accusations ; 'for having been obliged from his first entrance into the world to subsist upon expedients, affluence

was not able to exalt him above them ; and so much was he delighted with wine and conversation, and so long had he been accustomed to live by chance, that he would at any time go to the tavern without scruple, and trust for the reckoning to the liberality of his company, and frequently of company to whom he was very little known.'

Savage, in giving his reasons for the dispute with his patron, states that ' Lord Tyrconnel had involved his estate, and therefore poorly sought an occasion to quarrel with him.' Moreover, he said his lordship had taken the liberty of exhorting him to regulate his method of life ; had protested against his spending his nights in taverns, and requested that he would pass those hours with him which he so freely bestowed upon others. Liberty is dear to a bohemian, and Savage resented this interference with it ; he loftily declared he ' would spurn that friend who should presume to dictate to him.' He added that his maintenance and allowance was not so much a favour as a debt ; as it was offered him upon conditions which he had never broken. However, the result of the quarrel was that the old life of wretchedness and want lay once more before him.

When Ensden, the parson poet-laureate died,

Savage exerted all the interest he possessed to gain the vacant office. To succeed such a rhymester as Ensden would, in itself, have been no honour. The pieces written on particular occasions by him had but brought him ridicule from the town in general, and merciless satire from such pens as those of Pope, Oldmixon, the Duke of Buckingham, and Savage. However, the vast merit which Lord Halifax beheld in the translation which Ensden made into Latin verse of his lordship's poem, the 'Battle of the Boyne,' had secured him that nobleman's patronage, and eventually gained him the laureateship from George the First, who probably never read a line of verse in his life. Savage, in satirising this reverend and poetic personage, gives a strange picture of him. 'Methinks Laurus had better been an university vintner than a divine or a poet,' he writes. 'Would not bad wine have been easier put off than bad poetry? Had not a bunch of grapes flourished more naturally on his brow than a sprig of bays? Had he not with more propriety been seen sitting astride a butt, with a bottle in one hand and a bumper in the other, roaring out a merry catch, than mounting, after the first stave, to thump a pulpit cushion, and pause at every half sentence with a hiccup?'

Now that the laureate had gone to enjoy the music of the spheres, Savage sought his place ; which was, however, given to Colley Cibber, whose verses were scarcely less inferior to those of his predecessor. But notwithstanding his disappointment, Savage addressed an ode to the queen, signing himself the Volunteer Laureate. Having written the poem, he had no friend at court to present it, and the verses, therefore, made their appearance in pamphlet form. No sooner, however, had her Majesty heard of them than she despatched a messenger to the bookseller for a copy, and though the usual ceremony of presentation was wanting, she was obliging enough to send him a bank-bill for fifty pounds, accompanied by a gracious message that she was highly pleased with the verses, that he had permission to write annually on the same subject, and that he should yearly receive the same present.

He therefore continued to style himself the Voluntary Laureate, much to the disgust of Colley Cibber, who took an opportunity of informing him that 'the title of laureate was a mark of honour conferred by the king, from whom all honour is derived, and which, therefore, no man has a right to bestow upon himself ; and that he might with equal propriety style

himself a volunteer lord or a volunteer baronet.' Savage, however, did not consider any title which was conferred upon Colley Cibber so honourable as that the usurpation of it could be imputed to him as an instance of very exorbitant vanity. He therefore continued to write under the same title, and to receive the promised reward. This sum was by no means equal to his notions of luxury, and with the reckless improvidence of his character, it was quickly spent. Whilst it lasted, he feasted sumptuously at taverns, drank rich wines, kept gay company; and then when his last guinea had rattled on a tavern table, or passed into the possession of a woman of the town, he faced the future without the certainty of a meal or a lodging.

Johnson gives us a very graphic etching — most worthy of remembrance — of the poet's life at this time. 'For some part of the year,' he writes, 'Savage generally lived by chance; eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often excluded him, when the politeness and variety of his conversation would have been thought a sufficient recompense for his entertainment. He lodged as much by accident as he dined, and passed the night sometimes

in mean houses which are set open at night to any casual wanderers, sometimes in cellars among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble, and sometimes, when he had not money to support even the expenses of these receptacles, walked about the streets till he was weary, and lay down, in the summer, on a bulk, or in the winter, with his associates in poverty among the ashes of a glass-house.

‘ In this manner were passed those days and those nights which Nature had enabled him to have employed in elevated speculations, useful studies, or pleasing conversation. On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house, among thieves and beggars, was to be found the author of “The Wanderer;” the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senates, and whose delicacy might have polished courts.’

On the death of the queen the sum he was in the habit of receiving from her as voluntary laureate ceased, and he was now poorer than ever. His distress being, however, publicly

known, his friends held counsel together that they might concert some means of helping him. The result was a proposal to raise by subscription a sum of fifty pounds a year, on which he should retire into Wales, where he could live in a private and economical manner without, as they agreed, 'aspiring to influence, but at the same time without any dependence on those little creatures which we are pleased to call the great.' This offer, the poor poet, now in the lowest state of distress, gladly accepted, and looked forward with pleasure to residing in the country; of which it may be remarked he had not the slightest knowledge, except such as he had gathered from pastorals and other songs descriptive of rural delights. To the man whose days had been passed between the garret and the tavern, the land lying outside the city gates was an arcadian scene of flowery meads, watered by silver streams, dotted by flower-covered cottages; where innocent pleasures obtained, where nightingales perpetually sang, where sorrow and sin, toil and trouble were unknown. A poet's heart beat in his breast; a poet's imagination tinted his future with hues of the rose.

Full of hope, he therefore bade adieu to London town; having fifteen guineas in his pocket,

which it was intended should pay his way to Swansea, and support him there for some time. But fourteen days after his departure, he wrote to his friends that he was yet upon the road, and that, not having a penny in his purse, he could proceed no further. A remittance was therefore sent him ; and he reached Swansea, feeling sadly disappointed with the country, miserably dissatisfied with his lot, and full of indignation with those who, he said, had banished him from town. These feelings he took care to express forcibly in the letters he addressed to his friends ; the result being that several of them refused to further subscribe towards his support. After about a year's residence in Swansea, he set out for London ; but reaching Bristol on his way, tarried there, where he was received with generous kindness, until such time as his conduct wearied his new friends. Here his life became a sequel to what it had been in London : he contracted debts at taverns, was pursued by bailiffs, starved, was cast into prison, and ended his most miserable life on the last day of July, in the year 1743.



## CHAPTER V.

Goldsmith in London. — Physician, Usher, and Hack-writer. — The 'Monthly Review.' — In Green Court Arbour. — Beginning the World at Thirty-one. — Letters to His Friends in Ireland. — The Great City by Night. — Johnson's Garret. — Drinking Tea with Mrs. Williams. — The Black Boy. — The Philosopher's Appearance. — Visiting with Mr. Joshua Reynolds. — The Great Mr. Richardson. — An Evening Walk with the Sage.

MORE than ten years later, another man of genius, who was destined to become one of the most polished writers of the age, one of the most delightful poets of his century, might be seen pushing his sad, slow way through the crowded, friendless streets of London. This was the simple-minded, tender-hearted Oliver Goldsmith. He had landed in Dover from his foreign travels in February, 1756, and for twelve weary days had journeyed to London, footsore and sick of heart ; now acting in a barn with some strolling players, and again begging employment from an apothecary, that he might not starve before reaching the great city which was to be the scene of his future keen priva-

tions, sordid humiliations, brief triumphs, and premature death.

Penniless and almost hopeless, he, on his arrival, herded by night among the beggars in Axe Lane, and by day wandered from one druggist's shop to another, humbly asking them to let him pound their mortars, spread their ointments, and run of their messages ; but ' his threadbare coat,' says Percy, ' his uncouth figure, and his Hibernian dialect caused him to meet with repeated refusals.' At last there came a day when one Jacob, living at the corner of Monument Yard in Fish Street Hill, a man who had more compassion in his heart than those to whom poor Goldsmith had previously applied, gave him employment, and he rose from being an apothecary's drudge to become a ' physician in a humble way.' As such he might be seen going his round in the poor districts of the town, clad in a suit of green velvet and gold, well-worn and tarnished in the previous service of some more fortunate master ; in which array he was encountered by his old school-fellow Beatty, whom, in the face of all appearances, he assured that he was practising physic and doing very well indeed. Presently this faded finery was exchanged for a more sober suit of black velvet, which was, alas ! neither new nor per-

fect ; for on the left breast was a considerable patch, which it was the poor physician's greatest anxiety to keep covered with his hat whilst attending his humble patients, declining their polite efforts to relieve him of its care. ' But this constant position,' says Prior, who tells the story, ' becoming noticed, and the cause being soon known, occasioned no little merriment at his expense.'

Now it happened that amongst his patients was a workman in the employment of Samuel Richardson, the admired author, and what was more to the purpose, the eminent publisher, who, noting the physician's neediness, and suspecting his hunger, ventured to hint that as his master was ever ready to do a kind turn to men of parts, he might be of help to Mr. Goldsmith. The mention of the printer's name stirred the physician's heart ; for already he had dreams of becoming an author, and had indeed written a great tragedy, of which the world was never destined to hear. An introduction was therefore speedily established, by this humble means, between the starving physician and the prosperous publisher, who gave him employment as corrector for his press. Moreover, he gradually admitted him to his familiar intercourse, and introduced him to his friends, one of whom was

Dr. Young, the esteemed author of 'Night Thoughts.'

This ~~was~~ indeed a great help to poor Goldsmith, who ~~was~~ now enabled to carry on his work as corrector for the press at the same time that he practised physic, — an employment which had barely prevented starvation, and in which he beheld no chance of improvement. For Goldsmith's manner lacked the polish, and his person the air of prosperity which are essential commendations in physicians to the rich ; moreover, his honesty, as Prior significantly remarks, 'despised that intrigue which some of his brethren find a convenient substitute for talent.' So few and small indeed were his fees that he soon abandoned such poor practice as was his for an ushership at a school kept by a dissenting minister, one Dr. Milner, which was obtained for him by that gentleman's son. Here he underwent the drudgery, then even more than now inseparable to such an occupation, with a brave spirit and a cheerfulness of disposition which made him alike the delight of his pupils and the friend of his employers. His salary was small indeed, and was mostly drawn in advance, in order that it might be spent in giving charity to beggars, or in buying fruits and sweet-meats for the boys ; so that when quarter-day

came round he had but little to receive, and this little went with alarming rapidity.

‘Had you not better,’ said Mrs. Milner, to him one day, ‘let me keep your money for you, as I do for some of the young gentlemen?’

‘In truth, madam,’ replied the simple-hearted usher, ‘there is equal need.’

It was at Dr. Milner’s table that he became acquainted with personages whose very names were spoken by Grub-Street authors with bated breath. These were Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths, who kept a book shop at the sign of ‘The Dunciad,’ in Paternoster Row. Griffiths was not only a bookseller, but was likewise a printer, and the projector and proprietor of the ‘Monthly Review;’ and in his various avocations was aided by his spouse, a lady of literary tastes. The worthy pair have been charmingly described by an irreverent pen in Smollett’s ‘Critical Review,’ probably, indeed by that ingenious author, the one as ‘an illiterate bookseller,’ and the other as ‘an antiquated Sappho, a Sibyl, or rather a Pope Joan in taste and literature, pregnant with abuse begot by rancour under the canopy of ignorance.’ Now Goldsmith, who had found time during the intervals of his hard toil to produce manuscripts which were wont to fill the pockets of his rusty velvet suit until his

ungainly figure looked ridiculous, saw in the worthy bookseller and his wife beings who, if they were illiterate, yet had the fateful power of enabling him to fulfil his long-cherished desire of becoming an author. So when the discourse at Dr. Milner's table turned on literature, Goldsmith took much pains to show he was well qualified to pronounce an opinion upon such matters. Griffiths in return paid him attention, and being acquainted with his tastes and former employment with Samuel Richardson, engaged him as a regular writer for his 'Monthly Review.'

The terms which he was to receive for working six hours daily were his board and lodging, and an 'adequate salary.' What pittance the humble usher considered adequate is not known. His life, however, was not all that he had expected; it was, indeed, but drudgery in a new form. Not only were such articles, essays, and reviews — as he wrote invariably for six hours a day, and occasionally for double that time — penned at the dictation of Griffiths; but suggestions, corrections, and alterations were made by Mrs. Griffiths. Moreover, he was accused by the illiterate bookseller of affecting independence, — no doubt a serious offence in the eyes of one whose word was law to the hacks he

employed ; and he was subjected in the domestic arrangements to many privations by the antiquated Sappho, — ‘ a woman,’ says De Quincey, ‘ who would have broken the back of a camel, which must be supposed tougher than the heart of an usher.’

His connection with them, therefore, did not last long. At the end of about five months, he parted from them with mutual dissatisfaction ; and the poor drudge found himself free once more, and happy in his freedom, though it was attained at the cost of probable starvation. He was, therefore, again upon the streets, struggling for bread by day, lying Heaven knows where by night ; making hard shifts to live — for to live was now his sole ambition. Then when starvation dogged him through the friendless streets, he turned to Dr. Milner's school once more, and sought refuge in the drudgery of an ushership.

But after his brief experience as an author, the life of an usher seems to have become doubly irksome to him, and he soon left Dr. Milner's academy, and towards the end of 1758, took a lodging in Green Arbour Court, in the Old Bailey, when he set to work upon ‘ *An Inquiry into the present State of Polite Literature in Europe*,’ a work he fondly trusted would bring



BISHOP PERCY.





him both money and reputation. This lodging was a single room in a garret ; uncomfortable, miserably poor, nay, ' wretchedly dirty,' according to the statement of a friend of his, the Rev. Thomas Percy.

This gentleman, who afterwards became Lord Bishop of Dromore, but who is now better remembered as the ingenious author of the ' Reliques,' had been introduced to Goldsmith at the ' Temple Exchange Coffee House.' Being one who loved letters greatly, and relished the society of those who pertained to the profession of literature, he was vastly pleased with Goldsmith's conversation, which, beneath the clearness of its simplicity, showed sparkling gems of thought and precious ore of fancies. So delighted was he with the poor writer, that soon after their first meeting he must wait on him in his garret, which he found so wretched ; a circumstance, he avows, he would not think of mentioning, did he not consider it the highest proof of Goldsmith's genius and talents that by ' the bare exertion of their powers, under every disadvantage of person and fortune, he could gradually emerge from such obscurity to the enjoyment of all the comforts, and even luxuries, of life, and admission into the best societies in London. There was but one chair,' says Mr.

Percy, 'and when he, from civility, offered it to his servant, he himself was obliged to sit in the window. Whilst conversing, some one gently rapped at the door, and being desired to come in, a poor, ragged little girl of very decent behaviour entered, who, dropping a courtesy, said, " My mamma sends her compliments, and begs the favour of you to lend her a chamber-pot full of coals."

But it was long before Goldsmith was to enjoy the society of the polite and learned; and meanwhile, here he was, as he writes to ' Robert Bryanton, Esquire, at Ballymahon, Ireland,' ' in a garret, writing for bread, and expecting to be dunned for a milk score.' This letter, and others penned in this lodging, he headed ' Temple Exchange Coffee House, where answers may be directed;' being anxious to withhold the name of the humble abode which sheltered him from the knowledge of those whom he addressed. Though the general tone of these epistles is cheerful, and even occasionally indulges in hopeful fancies for the future, yet here and there are touches which reveal the hard condition of the poor hack in vivid colours.

' I must confess it gives me some pain,' he writes to his brother, the Rev. Henry Goldsmith, ' to think I am almost beginning the

world at the age of thirty-one. Though I never had a day's sickness since I saw you, yet I am not that strong, active man you once knew me. You scarcely can conceive how much eight years of disappointment, anguish, and study have worn me down. If I remember right, you are seven or eight years older than me, yet I dare venture to say, if a stranger saw us both, he would pay me the honours of seniority. Imagine to yourself a pale, melancholy visage, with two great wrinkles between the eyebrows, with an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig, and you may have a perfect picture of my present appearance.' Then he goes on to paint the contrast which he imagines exists between them. 'On the other hand,' he says, 'I conceive you as perfectly sleek and healthy, passing many a happy day among your own children, or those who knew you as a child. Since I knew what it is to be a man, this is a pleasure I have not known. I have passed my days among a parcel of cool, designing beings, and have contracted all their suspicious manner in my own behaviour. I should actually be as unfit for the society of my friends at home, as I detest that which I am obliged to partake of here. I can now neither partake of the pleasure of a revel, nor contribute to raise its jollity.

I can neither laugh, nor drink, have contracted an hesitating, disagreeable manner of speaking, and a visage that looks ill-nature itself ; in short, I have thought myself into a settled melancholy, and an utter disgust of all life brings with it.'

One cannot but smile at the idea of simple-hearted, trusting Oliver Goldsmith becoming suspicious in his manner. In another letter which he wrote to Mrs. Jane Lawder at this time, he lays bare more than a corner of his foolish, tender heart. He apologises for not having lately written to her because he was in such circumstances that all his endeavours to retain her regard might be attributed to wrong motives. He fears his letters might have been looked upon as the petitions of a beggar, instead of the offerings of a friend ; whilst his professions, instead of being considered as the result of disinterested esteem, might be ascribed to venal insincerity. No doubt Mrs. Jane Lawder had too much generosity to place them in such a light, but he could not bear even the shadow of a suspicion. The most delicate friendships, he reminds her, are always most sensible of the slightest invasion ; and the strongest jealousy is ever attendant on the warmest regard. He could not, therefore, con-

tinue a correspondence, for every acknowledgment for past favours might be considered as an indirect request for future ones.

‘It is true,’ he continues, in this charming letter, ‘this conduct might have been simple enough, but yourself must confess it was in character. Those who know me at all know that I have always been actuated by different principles from the rest of mankind, and while none regarded the interest of his friend more, no man on earth regarded his own less. I have often affected bluntness to avoid the imputation of flattery, have frequently seemed to overlook those merits too obvious to escape notice, and pretended disregard to those instances of good nature and good sense which I could not fail tacitly to applaud; and all this lest I should be ranked amongst the grinning tribe, who say “Very true,” to all that is said; who fill a vacant chair at a tea-table; whose narrow souls never moved in a wider circle than the circumference of a guinea; and who had rather be reckoning the money in your pocket than the virtue of your breast. All this, I say, I have done, and a thousand other very silly, though very disinterested, things in my time, and for all which no soul cares a farthing about me. God’s curse, madam! is it to be wondered that he

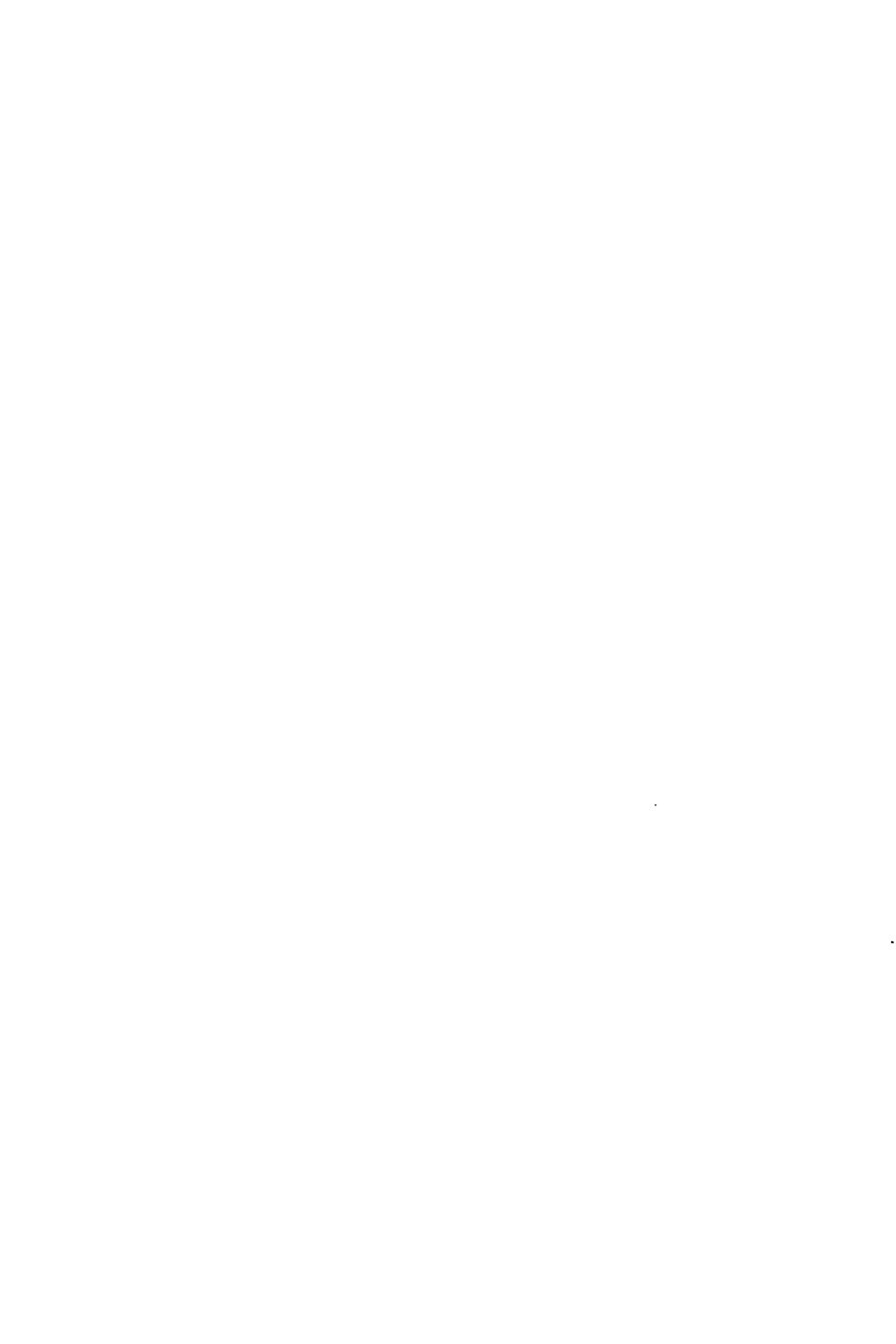
should once in his life forget you, who has been all his life forgetting himself?

‘However,’ he says playfully, ‘it is probable you may one of those days see me turned into a perfect hunk, and as dark and intricate as a mouse-hole. I have already given my landlady orders for an entire reform in the state of my finances. I declaim against hot suppers, drink less sugar in my tea, and check my grate with brickbats. Instead of hanging my room with pictures, I intend to adorn it with maxims of frugality. Those will make pretty furniture enough, and won’t be a bit too expensive; for I shall draw them all out with my own hands, and my landlady’s daughter shall frame them with the parings of my black waistcoat. Each maxim is to be inscribed on a sheet of clean paper, and wrote with my best pen; of which the following will serve as a specimen: “Look sharp;” “Mind the main chance;” “If you have a thousand pounds you can put your hands by your sides and say you are worth a thousand pounds every day of the year;” “Take a farthing from a hundred and it will be a hundred no longer.” Thus, which way soever I turn my eyes, they are sure to meet one of those friendly monitors; and as we are told of an actor who hung his room round with looking-glass to cor-



OLIVER GOLDSMITH.





rect the defects of his person, my apartment shall be furnished in a peculiar manner to correct the errors of my mind.

‘Faith, madam,’ he concludes, ‘I heartily wish to be rich, if it were only for this reason, to say without a blush how much I esteem you ; but alas, I have many a fatigue to encounter before that happy time comes when your poor old simple friend may again give a loose to the luxuriance of his nature, sitting by Kilmore fire-side, recount the various adventures of a hard fought life, laugh over the follies of the day, join his flute to your harpsichord, and forget that ever he starved in those streets where Butler and Otway starved before him.’

Meanwhile he patiently endured ‘the meanesses which poverty unavoidably brings with it,’ and worked hard,—translating French works for the booksellers, writing essays for the magazines, and executing such odd literary jobs as came in his way. At one time he thinks that at last fortune is beginning to look more kindly on him, and again the fickle jade but frowns upon his endeavours. To a sensitive nature such as his the merest trifle served to imbue him to-day with the sunlight of hope, or wrap him to-morrow in the gloom of despair. But two brief months after his declaration that for-

tune was looking kindlier upon him, he writes to Griffiths, who had lent him clothes which in great necessity he had pawned, begging that he might be sent to gaol, 'as a favour that may prevent something more fatal. I have been,' he cries out, when at last he is goaded by misery and despondency to make complaint, 'some years struggling with a wretched being with all that contempt which indigence brings with it, with all those strong passions which make contempt insupportable. What then has a gaol that is formidable? I shall at least have the society of wretches, and such is, to me, true society.

'Had I been a sharper,' he continues, with a bitterness wrung from his heart, 'had I been possessed of less good-nature and native generosity, I might surely now have been in better circumstances. I am guilty, I own, of meanesses which poverty unavoidably brings with it; my reflections are filled with repentance for my imprudence, but not with any remorse for being a villain — that may be a character you unjustly charge me with. It is very possible both the reports you have heard and your own suggestions may have brought you false information with respect to my character; it is very possible that the man whom you now regard

with detestation may inwardly burn with grateful resentment ; it is very possible that upon a second perusal of the letter I sent you, you may see the workings of a mind strongly agitated with gratitude and jealousy. If such circumstances should appear, at least spare invective till my book with Mr. Dodsley shall be published, and then perhaps you may see the bright side of a mind, when my profession shall not appear the dictates of necessity, but of choice.'

At this time he felt, indeed, the full misery of his unhappy lot, and now and then words of self-commiseration, bubbling to the surface of his correspondence, would tell of the deep pain which beset his mind. When the Rev. Henry Goldsmith, in Ireland, is solicitous about the education of his son, and consults as to his future with Oliver, the latter replies that he must be taught thrift and economy ; for frugality and even avarice are true ambition, they affording the only ladder for the poor to rise to preferment. ' Let his poor uncle's example be placed before his eyes,' he continues. ' I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the insidious approaches of

cunning; and often by being, even with my narrow finances, charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty. Tell him this, and perhaps he may improve upon my example.'

Griffiths spared him the humiliation of sending him to gaol, and he was left in the undisturbed possession of that close garret-chamber which was so little indebted to the attentions of the housemaid. Here it was his habit to work steadily through the day, seated at a little window which commanded a view of innumerable chimneys and roofs of thickly crowded houses. Occasionally, in order to vary the monotony of his labours, he would assemble the children of Green Arbour Court in his poor chamber, and taking up the flute, which had ever been his resource from painful thoughts and sad, induce them to dance to its music. Then at night, locking up his door, he descended from his attic, and wandered through the lonely streets, up and down which he had so often trudged hungry and hopeless. The result of one of these solitary night walks was the production of his 'City Night Piece,' perhaps the most realistic and pathetic essay he ever penned. It also serves to give us a vivid etching of the

London streets by night. The opening paragraph is in itself a picture. 'The clock has struck two, the expiring taper rises and sinks in the socket, the watchman forgets the hour in slumber, the laborious and the happy are at rest, and nothing now wakes but guilt, revelry, and despair. . . . Let me no longer waste the page over the night of antiquity or the sallies of contemporary genius ; but pursue the solitary walk where vanity, ever changing, but a few hours past walked before me, when she kept up the pageant, and now like a forward child, seems hushed with her own importunities. What gloom hangs all around ! The dying lamp emits a yellow gleam, no sound is heard but of the chiming clock or the distant watch-dog. All the bustle of pride is forgotten, and this hour may well display the emptiness of human vanity.' Then he paints the deserted streets which but a little while ago were crowded, and in which those who now appear no longer wear their daily masks, nor attempt to hide their hardness, nor their misery. 'But who,' he asks, 'are those who make the streets their couch, and find a short repose from wretchedness at the doors of the opulent ? These are strangers, wanderers, and orphans, whose circumstances are too humble to expect redress, and their

distresses too great even for pity. Some are without the covering even of rags, and others emaciated with disease ; the world seems to have disclaimed them ; society turns its back upon their distress, and has given them up to nakedness and hunger. These poor, shivering females have once seen happier days, and been flattered into beauty. They have been prostituted to the gay, luxurious villain, and are now turned out to meet the severity of winter in the streets ; perhaps, now lying at the doors of their betrayers, they sue to wretches whose hearts are insensible to calamity, or debauchees who may curse, but will not relieve them.'

Early in 1759 his 'Enquiry' was published, from which time the severest part of his life struggle ceased. He was now soon to leave Green Arbour Court, with its polluted atmosphere, crowded tenements, and squalid misery, for more comfortable quarters in Wine Office Court. And though he was yet to shrink from the dreaded presence of the bailiff, he had bidden farewell to hunger ; though he was still to shed tears of vexation on the reception of one of his plays, his feet had left the pathway of despair for the certain road to fame.

About this time he met with Samuel Johnson, a man whose name had become familiar to the

town as the compiler of a great dictionary, as a writer whose influence had begun to make itself felt, as one who, though in need of the patronage of the great, had openly dared to despise the favour of a lord. 'This was,' Goldsmith says, in speaking of his first encounter with the great man, 'a very grave personage, whom at some distance I took for one of the most reserved and even disagreeable figures I had seen ; but as he approached his appearance improved ; and when I could distinguish him thoroughly, I perceived that in spite of the severity of his brow he had one of the most good-natured countenances that could be imagined.'

Johnson was, at the time they became acquainted, living in Gough Square, hard by Fleet Street, where he had written his dictionary, and where he was now preparing his edition of 'Shakespeare ;' the subscriptions for which constituted the only means of his subsistence. His study, if it may be designated by such a name, was, according to Dr. Burney, situated in a poor garret, sparsely furnished with 'an old crazy deal table,' a chair and a half ; his sole library being represented by six Greek folios and some of the volumes of 'Shakespeare' at which he was working. Here the sage, clad in a suit of rusty brown, would, whilst balancing him-



self with considerable dexterity on a chair which could boast of but three legs and an arm, deliver himself of opinions on all things in heaven and on earth. The while he shook his great head in a tremulous manner ; moved his body backwards and forwards with a swaying motion ; rubbed his left knee with the palm of his hand ; and in the intervals of articulation made various sounds with his mouth, ‘as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud ; sometimes giving a half whistle ; sometimes making his tongue play backwards and forwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing under his breath, *too, too, too*,—all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile.’

Then if such visitors as he entertained in his study found favour in his sight, he would invite them to his apartments below to drink tea with his friend and companion, Mrs. Anna Williams. This pale, shrunken, blind old lady, the daughter of a late ingenious Welsh physician, was a woman of some literary ability,—inasmuch as she had a knowledge of the French and Italian languages, translated the life of the Emperor Julian, and wrote verses ; moreover, she was a remarkable conversationalist, and possessed vast

powers of entertainment. She had been a friend of Mrs. Johnson some time before the death of that lady, and when she lost her sight through cataract, Johnson, out of the charity of his great heart, made her the partner of his dwelling. Not only was her mind well-informed, and her manner sprightly, but her appearance was genteel, and must have brightened up the otherwise solitary lodgings of the great man, who, notwithstanding the resources of his mind, was ever unwilling to be left alone.<sup>1</sup> Miss Hawkins, in her interesting 'Memoirs,' speaks of Mrs. Williams as 'an old lady dressed in scarlet made in the handsome French fashion, with a lace cap, with two stiffened, projecting wings on the temples, and a black-lace hood over it.'

So attired, she would sit at a little table in Johnson's rooms, making tea for such friends as he carried with him from Dodsley's or Newberry's shop, or the 'Bedford' or 'Turk's Head Coffee House.' Johnson was an inveterate, or as he describes himself, 'a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has for many years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to

<sup>1</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote of Johnson that 'The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself.'

cool, who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnights, and with tea welcomes the morning.'<sup>1</sup> Never was he in such excellent humour with himself and the world at large than when drinking cup after cup of this beverage at Mrs. Williams's table. Notwithstanding her blindness, the old lady brewed tea with considerable dexterity ; though, adds one who sat at her board, ' her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full enough appeared a little awkward, for she put her finger down a certain way till she felt the tea touch it.'<sup>2</sup>

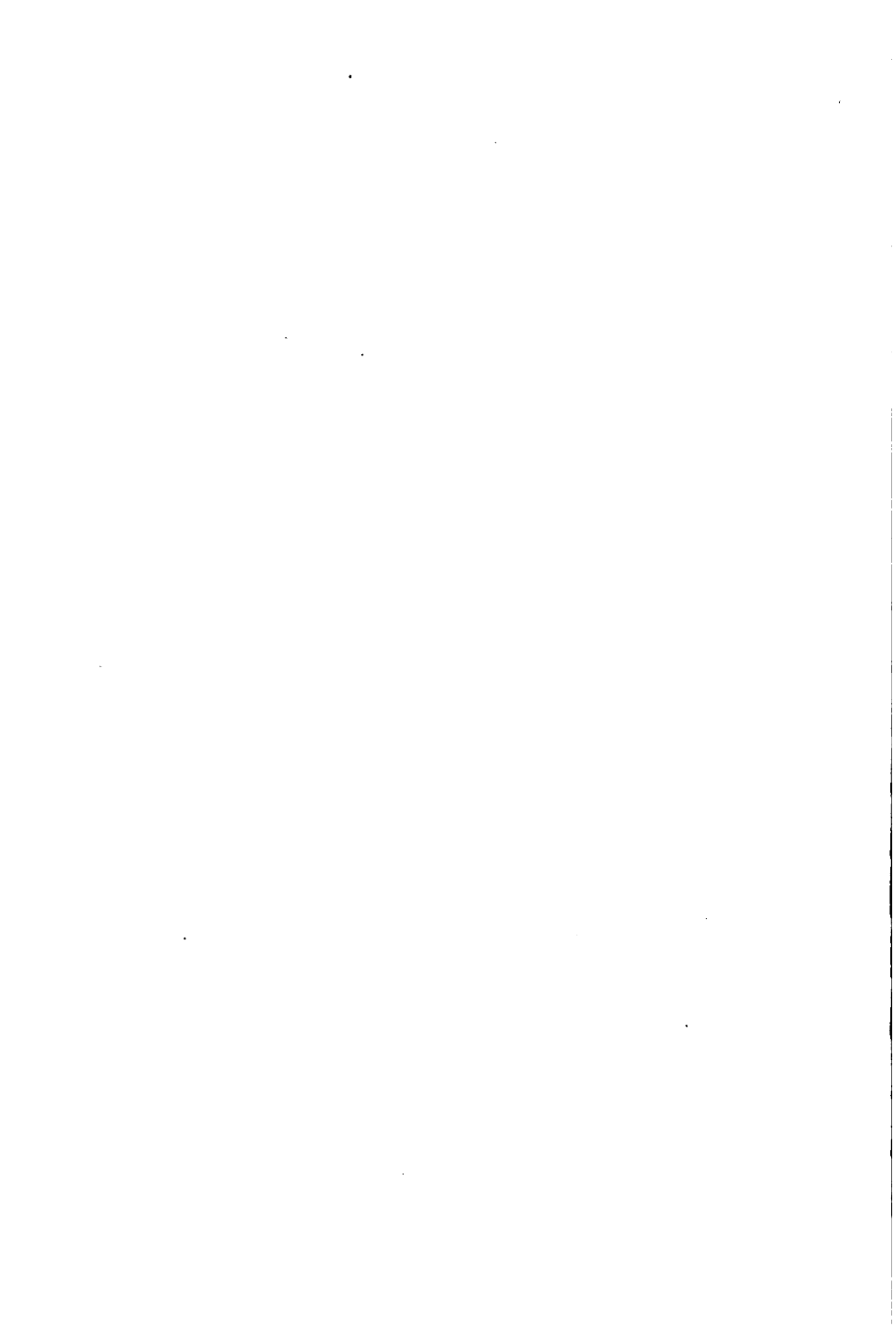
Gathered round Mrs. Williams's tea-table we find a right pleasant company, such as Gold-

<sup>1</sup> Northcote, in his life of Reynolds, says that ' Johnson's extraordinary, or rather extravagant, fondness for this refreshment did not fail to excite notice wherever he went ; ' and it is related that whilst on his Scottish tour, and spending some time at Dunvegan, the castle of the chief of the Macleods, the Dowager Lady Macleod, having repeatedly helped him until she had poured out sixteen cups, then asked him if a small bason would not save him trouble, and be more agreeable. ' I wonder, madam,' answered he, roughly, ' why all the ladies ask me such questions ! It is to save yourself trouble, madam, and not me.' The lady was silent, and resumed her task.

<sup>2</sup> In justice, it must be added that Percy says, ' When she made tea for Johnson and his friends, she conducted it with so much delicacy, by gently touching the outside of the cup, to feel, by the heat, the tea as it ascended within, that it was rather matter of admiration than of dislike.'



W:<sup>m</sup> Hogarth



smith, who entertained a high opinion of his hostess ; Dr. Burney, the musician ; Shiels, the poor poet ; Mr. Diamond, the apothecary from Cork Street, Burlington Gardens, with whom Mrs. Williams dined every Sunday ; Mrs. Masters, the poetess ' who lived with Mr. Cave ; ' David Garrick and Peg Woffington ; Mr. Bennet Langton, a young gentleman with a ' mild countenance, elegant features, and a sweet smile,' who hailed from Trinity College, Oxford ; Mr. Topham Beauclerk, a beau of the first distinction, a conversationalist of the choicest wit, whom Johnson loved ; Mrs. Gardiner, a worthy woman, wife to a tallow-chandler in Snow Hill ; Mr. Dodsley, the bookseller ; Mr. Strahan, the printer ; and young Mr. Reynolds the painter, who had, since 1752, fixed himself in handsome apartments in St. Martin's Lane. Johnson having refreshed himself with his favourite beverage, Mrs. Williams, knowing his ways, would lead the great man on to talk, whilst those around him listened with the utmost attention, putting a question here, or asserting an opinion there, for the purpose of eliciting further reflections on the discourse which occupied him ; for his conversation, as Hogarth said, illustrating his speech by a simile savouring of his profession, was, to the talk of

other men, like Titian's painting compared with Hudson's. Mrs. Williams, on these occasions, would likewise divert the company, having a most retentive memory, and loving gossip greatly. At such times her temper, which 'was marked by Welsh fire,' was placid; but at other periods of the day it was wont to be much exercised by the meaner inmates of the upper floors of Johnson's house, as well as by the black boy, Francis Barber, whom the sage kept, partly through charity, partly from love of his 'dear, dear Bathurst,' whose father had brought the negro to England. The black boy was supposed to act as body servant to the philosopher; though, as Sir John Hawkins observes, 'the uses for which Francis was intended to serve Johnson were not very apparent, for Diogenes himself never wanted a servant less than he seemed to do. The great, bushy wig, which throughout his life he affected to wear, by that closeness of texture which it had contracted and had been suffered to retain, was ever nearly as impenetrable by a comb as a quickset hedge; and little of the dust that had once settled on his outer garments was ever known to have been disturbed by the brush.'

Northcote states that he was so uncouth in his gait and action, and so slovenly in his dress,

as to attract the attention of passengers who met him in the street. On one occasion an impertinent jackanapes whom he passed, was so diverted by the philosopher's appearance that he commenced to imitate him in a most ludicrous manner. Johnson turned and saw him, and being most sensitive to ridicule, was so greatly angered that he at once determined on giving a practical proof of his feelings. Therefore, going up to the man, he said, 'You are a very weak fellow, and I will convince you of it,' on which he gave him a blow which sent the man out of the footpath into the dirty street flat on his back, when Johnson walked calmly on. His slovenliness, indeed, frequently brought him humiliation. Northcote also tells that one afternoon when Johnson, in company with Reynolds and his sister, went to visit the Miss Cotterells of Cavendish Street, who were neighbours of his, he was caused great pain by an unhappy mistake. Arriving at the door of the Miss Cotterells' house, the maid-servant, by accident, let them in, but did not know Johnson, though he had been a frequent visitor, he having always heretofore been admitted by the man-servant. 'Johnson was the last of the three visitors that came in ; when the servant maid, seeing this uncouth and dirty figure of a man,



and not conceiving he could be one of the company who came to visit her mistresses, laid hold of his coat just as he was going upstairs, and pulled him back again, saying, —

“ You fellow, what is your business here ? I suppose you intended to rob the house.”

‘ This most unlucky accident threw poor Johnson into such a fit of shame and anger, that he roared out like a bull ; for he could not immediately articulate, and was with difficulty at last able to utter, “ What have I done ? What have I done ? ” Nor could he recover himself for the remainder of the evening from this mortifying circumstance.’ His sensitiveness to his appearance was such that at least on one occasion it made him apprehensive of a slight where none was intended. Reynolds used to tell that when he and the great man were one afternoon calling on a gentlewoman who lived much in the fashionable world, the Duchess of Argyle and another lady of the first rank came in. Johnson, thinking that his hostess became too much engrossed with these fine friends, to the neglect of himself and Reynolds, of whom he fancied she was ashamed, grew angry. He therefore resolved to shock her supposed pride by making the great visitors imagine he and the painter were low indeed ; and addressing himself to



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.



Reynolds, in a loud voice, said, 'How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard as we could?*' The inference which he wished to have drawn being that they were common mechanics.

Johnson and Reynolds had become friends from the hour of their first introduction, which had taken place in the Miss Cotterells' drawing-room, by reason of an ingenious remark which the young painter made, to Johnson's prodigious satisfaction. The ladies, on this occasion, were deeply regretting the death of a friend to whom they owed vast obligations, upon which Reynolds observed, 'You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from the burden of gratitude.' The Miss Cotterells professed themselves shocked at the suggestion; but Johnson, after his manner, stoutly defended it, and expressed himself pleased with the just view of human nature which Mr. Reynolds' remark exhibited. When the painter, after a while, bowed himself out of the ladies' presence, Johnson jumped up, accompanied him to his rooms, and supped with him; and in this manner commenced that pleasant friendship which lasted for years, and ended but with death. The fact that the young painter had read and admired the author's '*Life of Savage*' had, no doubt, made clear the

way for their subsequent intimacy. Happening to meet the volume whilst in Devonshire, Reynolds opened and began to read it 'while he was standing, with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly that not being able to lay down the book until he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed.'

Reynolds, as became a young man of parts, had a vast admiration for distinguished writers, and especially for Samuel Richardson. Johnson, therefore, who at this time was well acquainted with this ingenious author, who, he says, 'has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue,' promised to introduce the artist and his sister; and accordingly carried them down to the bookseller's shop, and made them known to the printer. On their way thither, Johnson hinted that if they wanted to see Richardson in good humour, they must expatiate on the excellencies of his 'Clarissa.' This was what Johnson had done himself more than once, though no doubt his admiration was genuine, and had arisen not only from the merits of the author, but from gratitude at having been released by him on one occasion from the sponging-house. 'Though the story is long,' he



SAMUEL RICHARDSON.



writes to Richardson, 'every letter is short.' (The story, it will be remembered, is told in a series of epistles.) Then he begs him to add an *index rerum* to the work, 'for "Clarissa" is not a performance to be read with eagerness, and laid aside forever, but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious.'<sup>1</sup>

Before we take leave of ingenious Samuel Johnson's pleasant company, let us saunter with him as he takes his evening walk, accompanied by Langton or Topham Beauclerk, in the long, narrow, paved court, overshadowed by trees, close by Holborn; where the noise of the human current close by falls with a placid murmur that soothes his troubled meditations. There were few who loved the great capital better than he. To him it was a place of residence, pre-eminent over every other; a great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind had their fullest scope and their highest encouragement, — a very fountain of intelligence and pleasure. 'London is nothing to some people,' he said; 'but to a man whose pleasure is intel-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Piozzi writes that Johnson, in speaking of Richardson, said, 'You think I love flattery — and so I do; but a little too much always disgusts me. That fellow Richardson, on the contrary, could not be content to sail quietly down the stream of reputation without longing to taste the froth from every stroke of the oar.'



lectual, London is the place. Nowhere else cured a man's vanity or arrogance so well as London; for as no man was either great or good *per se*, but as compared with others not so good or so great, he was sure to find in the metropolis many his equals, and some his superiors.

Then he would discourse pleasantly on its growing importance and increasing population. Fleet Street had a very animated appearance, yet the full tide of human existence was Charing Cross. 'But,' he said, 'if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together that the wonderful immensity of London consists.'

Having enjoyed his walk in this shady court, he would take his slow way to the 'Temple Exchange Coffee House,' or on a certain night in the week to the 'King's Head Tavern,' in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, founded by him sixteen years before the famous Literary Club. And as he passes along, many a worthy citizen turns and stares at his burly figure; for 'when

he walked in the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet.' Moving in this slow fashion, he suddenly pauses, and in obedience to some superstitious habit, counts a certain number of steps from a certain point; then resumes his solemn march once more, avoiding to tread on the junction of the stones in the pavement, but carefully on the centre, and laying one hand on every stone-post he passed. The club was formed for the purpose of literary discussion and general relaxation, and could boast such members as the Rev. Dr. Salter, Mr. John Payne, the bookseller, Mr. Samuel Dyer, described as a learned young man, Dr. M'Ghie, a Scotch physician, and Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney. Here he resorted, with a disposition to please and be pleased; making it a rule to talk his best; showing occasionally a versatility of temper at which none took offence, but generally contributing to the mirth of conversation 'by the many witty sayings he uttered, and the many excellent stories which his memory had treasured up, and which he would on occasion relate.'

And so whilst he is sitting at the club-room table, surrounded by the friends who loved his

discourse, forgetful of his struggles in their genial society, enjoying the retort and the laughter which his wit has provoked, shall we take our regretful leave of this most central figure in the great history of our literature.

## CHAPTER VI.

Charles Macklin and his Tavern. — The British Inquisition. — Foote's most Excellent Wit. — Macklin's Pupils. — Foote as an Actor. — The Diversions of the Morning. — Drinking a Dish of Chocolate with the Wit. — His Mimicry. — Young Tate Wilkinson and Peg Woffington. — Her Anger and Resentment. — The Mimic Mimicked. — Wilkinson, Foote, and Garrick. — A Night at Drury Lane. — The Mirror at Covent Garden. — Rich, Foote, Garrick, and Wilkinson.

THE theatrical world and its ways during the last years of Peg Woffington's life afford an interesting, amusing, and not uninteresting study. Poor honest-hearted, whimsical Charles Macklin, whilst yet in the vigour of his life and fulness of his fame, resolved to retreat from the stage, before, as he said, 'the powers of acting were weakened by age and infirmity.' Accordingly, on the 20th of December, 1753, he took his farewell benefit at Covent Garden in 'The Refusal,' playing Sir Gilbert Wrangle, Mrs. Macklin, Lady Wrangle, and Miss Macklin, Charlotte; when the unbounded approbation of the audience, as Kirkman narrates, 'bear the most ample testimony of their satisfaction

and the actor's merit, they regretting loudly and repeatedly the retirement of their old favourite.'

At the conclusion of the play he spoke a farewell epilogue, in which he compared himself to a sailor tossed from shore to shore, sick, wet, and weary, who had resolved to go to sea no more. 'Some other schemes, of course, possess my brain,' he said, —

'A scheme I have in hand will make you stare,  
Though off the stage I still must be a player.'

He then commended his wife and daughter, who were yet to remain on the stage, to the favour of the audience; and having spoken his adieu, he bowed profoundly and retired, amidst the universal plaudits of his audience.

He had realised what was in those days considered a handsome fortune, the greater part of which he resolved to lay out in the execution of his scheme, already referred to, — one indeed of many which perpetually beset him with as much persistence as the demons did the good St. Anthony in his desert loneliness, — of establishing a tavern in the piazza of Covent Garden, to which was to be added what he was pleased to describe as 'a school of oratory, upon a plan hitherto unknown in England.' This school of oratory was to be called 'The British Inquisition.' As Charles Macklin was no common-

place man, the ordinary which was opened in March, 1745, was not, as may be supposed, conducted on principles like those which had heretofore regulated such mundane but necessary establishments. He commenced by furnishing his house in a superb manner, and stocking his cellar with the choicest wines. He then hired a vast number of bar-maids, cooks, waiters, and servants of all descriptions, whom he personally undertook to train in the way they should go ; moreover, he drew up a plan destined to regulate his remarkable ordinary, the rules of which were strictly adhered to whilst it lasted.

Dinner was announced in the daily papers to be ready by four o'clock, and a quarter of an hour before that time each day the whole neighbourhood of Covent Garden was alarmed by the pealing of a great bell affixed to the top of the house, this being a further advertisement, a trifle sensational in its form, that Mr. Macklin's dinner was just about to commence, and that ladies and gentlemen might step in and secure their places. As the clock struck the hour, dinner was laid upon the table ; the outer door was then shut, and no other customer was admitted to disturb those already present. Macklin, dressed in a full suit, with stockings rolled over his knees, long flaps to his waistcoat, enor-

mous cuffs, tight stock, and no collar to his coat, brought in the first dish with a slow and stately step that savoured of Hamlet in search of his father's ghost. Then making a low and gracious bow, that would have done honour to any theatrical potentate, he retired five paces in the direction of the sideboard. Here two of the principal waiters took their places beside him, and posed as ornamental figures during the meal. None of the servants were permitted to speak, save to answer as briefly as possible such questions as the guests addressed to them ; and in order to secure perfect uninterrupted to the discourse at the table, Macklin's orders were conveyed by a series of signals, which he had taught them for months previous to his opening this wonderfully regulated ordinary. When dinner was over, glasses and bottles were laid upon the table. Then Macklin gravely advanced five paces, bowed low to the company, and expressed his hopes that all things had been found agreeable. After this he passed the bell-rope round the back of the chair of the person sitting at the head of the table, made another low bow, and with calm stately grace slowly withdrew. The price of this dinner, it may be noted, was three shillings, including port, claret, or such liquor as the customer should choose.

When the ordinary, the etiquette of which savoured so much of the proprietor's former calling, had been established eight months, the 'British Inquisition' was opened to the public. The institution, as the originator of the scheme set forth in a wonderfully amusing and most pretentious advertisement, 'is upon the plan of the ancient Greek, Roman, and modern French and Italian societies of liberal investigation. Such subjects in arts, sciences, literature, criticism, philosophy, history, politics, and morality, as shall be found useful and entertaining to society, will be there lectured upon and freely debated; particularly Mr. Macklin intends to lecture upon the comedy of the ancients, the use of their masks and flutes, their mimes and pantomimes, and the use and abuse of the stage. He will likewise lecture upon the rise and progress of the modern theatres, and make a comparison between them and those of Greece and Rome; and between each other. He proposes also to lecture upon each of Shakespeare's plays, to consider the original stories from whence they are taken, the artificial or inartificial use, according to the laws of the drama, that Shakespeare has made of them; his fable, moral character, passions, manners, will likewise be criticised, and how his capital characters have



been acted heretofore, are acted, and ought to be acted. And as the design of this inquiry is to endeavour at an acquisition of truth in matters of taste, particularly theatrical, the lecture being ended, any gentleman may offer his thoughts upon the subject.

‘The doors will be open at five, and the lecture begin precisely at seven o’clock, every Monday and Friday evening.

‘Ladies will be admitted, price one shilling each person.

‘The first lecture will be on “Hamlet.”

‘N.B. — The question to be debated after the lecture will be whether the people of Great Britain have profited by their intercourse with, or their imitation of, the French nation.

‘There is a public ordinary every day at four o’clock, price three shillings each person ; to drink port, claret, or whatever liquor he shall choose.’

Inasmuch that Macklin knew nothing whatsoever of the Greek and Roman stages, or of the Greek and Latin languages, and very little of the French, and was entirely ignorant of the authors from whom Shakespeare drew his plots, which same facts were well known to the town at large, the British Inquisition was regarded from the first as nothing more nor less than a

burlesque, which the wits and men about town and coffee-house idlers generally, attended for the purpose of diverting themselves. The burlesque was heightened by the grave airs and complacent egotism of the chief actor, and by the numerous asides and farcical comments which frequently interrupted his discourses. Amongst those who made a point of attending the 'Inquisition' was Foote, whose inimitable wit found full play here, and who, by his quaint questions, his quick repartee, and the mock gravity of his remarks, threw the lecturer into a flutter of consternation, and the audience into a state of merriment throughout the evening.

Once during Macklin's dissertation on the Greek stage — taken bodily from Dryden's prefaces — the lecturer spoke of some Grecian customs, the origin of which were open to the dispute of the learned; at which point Foote stood up and said with a very solemn face, as he pointed to Macklin's cook, —

'Sir, here is a man who has been several times all over grease (Greece) — let us consult him.'

'Why, sir,' replied the cook, quite innocently, 'you make a mistake; I have never been beyond Greenwich in all my life.'

'Nay, nay,' replied Foote, yet more solemnly;

‘don’t tell a fib, man ; I have seen you myself at Spithead.’

At which Macklin, as well as the audience, laughed right heartily. Presently, when the lecturer had concluded, a group of friends gathered round him, and the conversation turned on Foote’s joke about the cook, and from the cook to the waiters, when one of the pretty fellows complimented Macklin on his manner of directing them by signals.

‘Ay, sir,’ said Macklin, quite triumphantly, ‘I knew it would do. And where do you think I pitched upon this hint ? I pitched upon it from no less a man than James Duke of York, who you know, sir, first invented signals for the fleet.’

‘Very *à propos*, indeed,’ said Foote, quietly, ‘and good poetical justice ; as from the fleet they were taken — so to the Fleet both master and signals are likely to return.’

Another lecture of Macklin’s, at which the wit was present, was delivered on the causes of duelling in Ireland, and the reasons why the practice obtained in that nation more than in any other. Commencing at the earliest period of Irish history, and the customs and habits of the Irish people, Macklin slowly prosed down the stream of Hibernian characteristics until he

arrived at the reign of Elizabeth, when Foote rose, Macklin stopped, and looking at him, said, —

‘ Well, sir, what have you to say upon the subject ? ’

‘ Only to crave a little attention, sir,’ says the wit, with great modesty, ‘ when I think I can settle this point in a few words.’

‘ Well, sir, go on,’ cried Macklin, all attention.

‘ Why then, sir,’ said Foote, ‘ what o'clock is it ? ’

‘ O'clock ! ’ says the lecturer, taken aback. ‘ What has that to do with a dissertation on duelling ? ’ And he drew himself up solemnly.

‘ Pray, sir,’ says Foote, ‘ be pleased to answer my question, and you will speedily learn.’

Macklin, not without some uneasiness, pulled out his watch, and reported the hour to be half past ten.

‘ Very well,’ says Foote, thoughtfully, ‘ about this time of the night every gentleman in Ireland that can possibly afford it is on his third bottle of claret, consequently is in a fair way of getting drunk ; from drunkenness proceeds quarrelling, and from quarrelling duelling, and so there’s an end of the chapter.’

The company seemed so satisfied with this abridgment that Macklin walked off his plat-

form, and said no more upon the subject. Indeed, he soon began to detest this man, who with such little seeming offence turned him into ridicule at pleasure ; there was no escaping his ready answers, which were tempered with such humour that it was hard to resent them. One night when Macklin was preparing his lecture, he saw his witty tormentor in a corner of the room, surrounded as usual by a group of laughing friends.

‘ Well, sir,’ Macklin called out in an authoritative voice, ‘ you seem to be very merry there ; but do you know what I am going to say now ? ’

‘ No, sir,’ says Foote. ‘ Pray *do you* ? ’

And the crowd laughed louder than before. At times the lecturer would boast of his descent from the kings of Munster ; but declare at the same time that he was the first of his name.

‘ There was no other Macklin before me,’ he would say gravely, ‘ for I invented Macklin to get rid of that damned Irish name, Mc-Loughlin.’

‘ But, sir, might not such a name exist without your knowing it ? ’ said a grave dignitary of the Church to him one night.

‘ No, sir,’ he answered, with gruff assurance.

‘ Why, now I think of it,’ says the churchman, ‘ there was a printer towards the close of

the sixteenth century, near Temple Bar, of that name,' and he appealed to a friend of his learned in black letter lore, who declared he had seen several volumes with the name of Macklin at the bottom of the title-page.

'Well, Mr. Macklin, what do you say to that?' asks one of the company.

'Say, sir! Why, all I have to say is this,' he replied stiffly, reluctant to admit he was wrong, 'that black letter men will lie like other men.'

Not satisfied with catering for the mental and physical appetites of the public, he undertook to instruct candidates for the stage, who were, after a few lessons, required to give specimens of their various talents for the benefit of the public, in the lecture-room, three times a week. If the wits were pleased with his lectures, they were in transports with these exhibitions; and the raciest stories regarding master and pupils flew about the coffee houses and taverns. One of the aspirants for dramatic fame, 't was said, whilst reciting Othello's speech before the Senate, was observed to constantly throw back his left arm with great violence. 'Pray, sir,' said his tutor, 'keep back your left arm a little more; you are now, consider, addressing the Senate, and the right hand is the one to give grace and energy to your enunciation.'

‘Oh, sir,’ says the dramatic pupil, ‘it is only the sleeve of my coat, which I forgot to pin back, as I lost my left arm many years ago on board a man-of-war.’

Foote used to tell of another aspirant who applied to be instructed in the part of the *cock* in ‘Hamlet ;’ and of a certain individual who wrote to Macklin that he had a great desire to play the parts of Shakespeare’s heroines, for which he felt he had a vast amount of ability, that, with some instructions, would take the world by storm.

Delighted at having such a remarkable pupil, Macklin requested the favour of an interview with his correspondent, who turned out to be a blackamoor.

Not satisfied with ridiculing Macklin in his own rooms, Foote conceived the idea of burlesquing him for the greater diversion of the town. He had, years before, in 1744, made his *début* as an actor, to the infinite disgust of his friends, who were outraged that a man of quality should become a player.

‘What,’ said my Lord Carteret to him, in vast surprise, — ‘what can possess you to go on the stage, and play the fool?’

‘The same reason that actuates your lordship to play it off,’ answered the wit, solemnly.



MACKLIN'S HOUSE, TAVISTOCK ROW, COVENT GARDEN.





‘Why, what can that be?’ asked my lord, not quite seeing the point of the joke.

‘Want,’ replied Foote.

‘Want!’ repeated Lord Carteret.

‘Yes, want of money makes me play the fool ; and want of wit, your lordship.’

The noble earl in future kept his opinions regarding this new player to himself.

The character in which Foote selected to make his first appearance was that of Othello ; a fact affording another proof of the frequency with which men mistake the direction whence their talents lie. His tragedy, though played in all seriousness, was pronounced a masterpiece of burlesque ; but it proved inferior in its outrageous extravagance to his subsequent representation of the woe-stricken Hamlet ; whilst his Shylock likewise diverted all the town, the more so as Kitty Clive played Portia. From tragedy he descended to comedy, and gradually found his level in grotesque mimicry. Accordingly, he, in 1747, opened the little theatre in the Haymarket with a piece he had written for himself, called ‘The Diversions of the Morning,’ in which he daringly, and in the wittiest manner possible, mimicked the most prominent characters of the day, — such as Sir Thomas de Veil, a Westminster justice ; Cock, the cele-

brated engineer ; Orator Hanley, and the actors and actresses of both theatres. The players, one and all, grew furious at being made the laughing stock of the town, and declared they would be ruined. But Foote was implacable, and made fresh fun from their grumblings. Since, he said pleasantly enough, that was the case, it was his duty to provide a situation for each lady and gentleman so circumstanced ; and that instead of murdering blank verse, and assuming the characters of kings and queens, lords and ladies (for which their abilities were far from being suitable), he would place them where their talents and behaviour could with more propriety be employed.

He, therefore, with inimitable wit, gave representations of them in their new occupations. Quin, with his sonorous voice and slow gait, he personated as a watchman, crying out ‘ Past twelve o’clock, and a cloudy morning ; ’ Delane, who was supposed to have but one eye, was mimicked as a beggar-man ; Ryan, because of his shrill voice, as a razor-grinder, calling out, ‘ Razors to grind, sissars to grind, penknives to grind,’ and so on. Nay, even the great Garrick was not spared, for Foote, seizing on his habit of hesitation, imitated his dying sentence in the character of Lothario in a manner which con-

vulsed a public, then, as now, more appreciative of the ridiculous than the sublime.

The actors were, however, soon to have their revenge. Along with 'The Diversions of the Morning,' which was merely an entertainment, Foote ventured to play some scenes from Congreve's 'Old Bachelor.' As the Haymarket was not licensed, this was illegal, and Lacey of Drury Lane made speedy application to the Lord Chamberlain to have the performances suppressed; the result of which was, a troop of constables entered the playhouse one night, cleared out the audience, and shut the doors. Foote, however, being a man of resources and courage, was not cast down by this unceremonious treatment.

'He has wit,' said Johnson, 'and one species of wit in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, sir, when you think you have got him — like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse.'

Accordingly, on this occasion he jumped over the heads of the authorities in a manner which delighted the town by its readiness. On the very morning following that on which the con-

stables had visited his theatre, he inserted the following notice in the columns of the 'General Advertiser,' which astonished and amused the public to a vast degree. 'On Saturday afternoon, exactly at twelve o'clock, at the new theatre in the Haymarket, Mr. Foote begs the favour of his friends to come and drink a dish of chocolate with him; and 't is hoped there will be a great deal of comedy and some joyous spirits. He will endeavour to make the morning as diverting as possible. Tickets to be had for this entertainment at George's Coffee House, Temple Bar, without which nobody will be admitted. N. B. — Sir Dilbury Diddle will be there, and Lady Betty Frisk has absolutely promised.'

This advertisement was read with delight in a hundred coffee houses from St. James's to St. Paul's, and laughed over in as many drawing-rooms. The postscript seemed to promise fun to those who were sure of not being burlesqued, and the town was certain of being diverted.

Therefore, before twelve o'clock a most fashionable gathering, which included the Duke of Cumberland, awaited Mr. Foote's appearance in the Haymarket Theatre. The duke had met the wit in Covent Garden that morning, and told him he was going to drink a dish of choco-

late with him at mid-day, when he expected some fun.

‘ You see,’ said this stout scion of royalty, ‘ I always swallow your good things.’

‘ Do you ?’ said Foote, slyly. ‘ Why, then, I congratulate your Royal Highness on your digestion, for I believe you never threw one of them up in your lifetime.’

When the green curtain slowly rose on this memorable morning, Foote came briskly forward, bowed low, and with a droll twinkle in his eye, said that he was just then preparing some young pupils for the stage, and whilst chocolate was getting ready, he would, with the permission of his audience, proceed with his instructions. With this preface he began his tuition to imaginary pupils, and gave imitations of actors and others well known to the town, with a wit that was more caustic and unsparing than before. Few prominent persons whose characteristics afforded the slightest scope for mimicry escaped him. Dr. Barrowby, who prided himself on his judgment as a theatrical critic ; Dr. Arne, whom he called Dr. Catgut ; and Chevalier Taylor, the quack oculist, — being especial butts for his mirth. For forty consecutive week-days he drew great crowds ; never had any performance been so droll, never had

audiences been so merry; for they laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks. At the expiration of these forty days, it struck Foote that an imitation of Macklin, delivering his rodomontade with an air of vast wisdom and gravity, would be certain to draw audiences afresh; he therefore gave a quaint and extravagant imitation of the actor, which had the result of filling his coffers to the extent of five hundred pounds, whilst it sent Macklin into the bankruptcy court.

So well were his caricatures received that he conceived the idea of writing plays to suit himself, the leading characters in which should be taken from real life, and exhibited under a veil of disguise so thin that the most short-sighted must perceive the original. The idea no sooner entered into his mind than it was acted upon, and a number of comedies ridiculing well-known men quickly succeeded each other. Perhaps the most successful of these was 'The Author,' produced in 1757, in which, under the name of Cadwallader, he mimicked Mr. Ap Rice, a Welsh gentleman familiar to the eyes of the town. Foote was a friend of Mr. Ap Rice, and had, therefore, constant opportunities of studying his portrait from the life.

On the first night of the production of this

play the Welsh gentleman was not only present, but, probably through the malicious contrivance of Foote, occupied a stage box, a position which, from its prominency, gave the audience an excellent chance of comparing the original with the caricature, stout of stomach, foolish of face, awkward of gait, and incoherent of speech. Never had the great mimic come so close to Nature ; a fact at once recognised by all present, save the victim. Yet none seemed to enjoy the fun more than he, who was in complete ignorance of its cause. But Mr. Ap Rice was not long permitted to remain in that condition which has been described as bliss. Whilst waddling his slow way through the streets, he was from this night forward stared and laughed at ; whilst, when he entered a coffee house or tavern, his ears were surprised by the whisper, ' There 's Cadwallader ! there 's Cadwallader ! ' Even to this most obtuse Welsh gentleman, it became unendurable ; a light suddenly broke in upon his brain ; and he sought and obtained protection from the Lord Chamberlain, who properly issued an order for the suppression of the play.

Mimicry, indeed, became highly fashionable about this time, and as there is ever a supply ready for a demand in the world of art, so there



sprang to the surface of theatrical life in those days a remarkable and highly ingenious youth who surpassed even Foote himself as a mimic. This was Tate Wilkinson, the son of Dr. Wilkinson, Chaplain to the Prince of Wales, and likewise of the Savoy Chapel. Soon after the passing of the marriage act, Dr. Wilkinson was, partly through the instrumentality of David Garrick, tried and sentenced to transportation, for celebrating marriages in the Savoy in defiance of the law. Before the sentence could, however, be carried out, Dr. Wilkinson died, leaving a widow and an only son, Tate. The young gentleman had great powers as a mimic, and burned with a desire of becoming a player. Now the first step necessary to attain this end was an introduction to the great actor-manager of Drury Lane. Accordingly, through the kindness of a friend, he obtained a letter from Lord Mansfield to David Garrick. Duly armed with this epistle, he walked several times up and down Southampton Street, where the famous actor then resided, before he could summon courage to rap at the door of his dwelling, 'fearing instant admission might follow,' he writes, 'or what appeared to me almost as dreadful, if graciously admitted how I should be able to walk, move, or speak before him.' At last he

rapped, ascertained that the great man was at home, delivered his letter, and after a delay of ten minutes, was ushered into his presence.

‘ Mr. Garrick,’ Wilkinson writes, ‘ glanced his scrutinizing eye first at me, then at the letter, and so alternately. At last — “ Well, sir — hey ? — what, now you are a stage candidate ? Well, sir, let me have a taste of your quality.” I, distilled almost to jelly with my fear, attempted a speech from Richard, another from Essex, which he encouraged by observing I was so much frightened that he could not form any judgment of my abilities, but assured me it was not a bad omen, as fear was by no means a sign of want of merit, but often the contrary. We then chatted for a few minutes ; and I felt myself more easy, and requested leave to repeat a few speeches in imitation of the then principal stage representatives. “ Nay — now,” says Garrick, “ sir, you must take care of this ; for I used to call myself the first at this business.” I luckily began with an imitation of Foote. It is difficult here to determine whether Garrick hated or feared Foote the most, sometimes one, sometimes the other was predominant ; but from the attention of a few minutes, his looks brightened ; the glow of his countenance transfused to mine, and he eagerly desired a repetition of

the same speech. I was animated ; forgot Garrick was present, and spoke at perfect ease.

“ Hey now, now, what all,” says Garrick. “ How, really — this — this — is — ” (With his usual hesitation and repetition of words.) “ Why — well — well. Do call on me again on Monday at eleven. You may depend upon every assistance in my power. I will see my brother manager, Mr. Lacey, to-day, and let you know the result.”

On Monday, young Tate Wilkinson ‘slid up Southampton Street,’ and was speedily admitted to the presence of the great actor, who addressed him as ‘young gentleman,’ told him he had determined to put him on the books at thirty shillings a week for the ensuing season, and requested a repetition of his imitation of Mr. Foote. From this, the ingenious youth, who was flattered by the famous actor’s attention, proceeded to give a representation of Peg Woffington as Lady Macbeth ; for being a clever young gentleman, and knowing the terms on which Garrick had parted with that lady, he had no doubt his efforts in this direction would afford a satisfaction exceeding that enjoyed even by his mimicry of Foote. Indeed, so vastly entertained was Garrick by the lad’s imitation of the woman he had once loved, and so bois-



JAMES LACY, ESQ.



terous was his laughter, that Wilkinson was obliged to stop.

‘I thought it very comical,’ he writes, ‘and that the joke might not be lost, I laughed too ; but on the merriment ceasing, I perceived a concealed third laughter, which greatly puzzled me, when on a sudden a green cloth double-door flew open, which I found led to a little breakfast parlour, and discovered a most elegant lady, no less a personage than Mrs. Garrick, who had, it seems, been purposely posted there for her secret opinion of my imitations. Mrs. Garrick apologised for her rudeness and intrusion, confessed she had taken possession of that snug spot, unobserved, at the desire of Mr. Garrick, as from his account of my imitations she expected to be much gratified ; but when she heard the tones of Mrs. Woffington, the ridicule was so strongly pointed that it was not in her power to refrain from laughter by the pleasure and great satisfaction she had received.’

Tate Wilkinson was delighted by the gratification which his mimicry of the great actress afforded Garrick and his wife ; for Peg Woffington, having but a little while before resented a supposed insult from the youth, he was not disposed to regard her with amicable feelings. The cause of the offence happened in this way.

One day Tate Wilkinson was asked by his friend, young Captain Forbes, who held a commission in his Majesty's Guards, and was, moreover, son of my Lord Granard, an Irish peer, to dine with him at 'The Bedford Arms.' When they had eaten and drank to their full satisfaction, they felt disposed, after the manner of young gentlemen, to make merry.

'Tate,' said the captain, 'we will go to the play, and I will treat you to the boxes.'

At this time Wilkinson was well known to Mr. Rich, to whom, indeed, he had presented himself as a candidate for a vacancy in his company. The worthy and cat-loving manager, who was unable to speak the king's English without blundering, and who yet cherished the belief in his harlequin's soul that he could win renown as a great tragedian if he but condescended to make a trial of his abilities, undertook to give the young gentleman lessons in elocution, and what was of more use to him, gave him the *entrée* to his levées, and free admission in front of the house. Now when young Captain Forbes went to the playhouse, he would sit only in the stage box, where, being in full guard regimentals, he looked a conspicuous figure, and 'being jolly with the bottle,' he drew considerable attention to himself and his friend.

Some of the players, seeing Wilkinson in a stage box, and believing he had installed himself there without payment, were indignant at what they considered his impudent bravado, and spoke to Rich, who sent a messenger to order him from his 'improper situation.' Captain Forbes soon convinced the servant of his mistake, and sent back word that Mr. Wilkinson was seated there by proper authority. It happened that Peg Woffington, who was playing Clarissa in 'The Confederacy,' was on the stage at the moment the box-keeper received his answer, and having heard that a young gentleman named Wilkinson was in the habit of mimicking her, she approached the box, looked at him in a manner that made him shrink back, and finished her speech in a sarcastic manner.

'My unfortunate star sure was then predominant,' says Wilkinson, speaking of this night, 'for at that moment a woman of the town, in the balcony above where I was seated, repeated some words in a remarkably shrill tone, which occasioned a general laugh; like electricity it caught Mrs. Woffington's ear, whose voice was far from being enchanting. On perceiving the pipe squeak on her right hand, and being conscious of the insult she had then given apparently to me, it struck her comprehension so forcibly



that she immediately concluded I had given the retort upon her in that open and audacious manner. She again turned and darted her lovely eyes, though assisted by the furies, which made me look confounded and sheepish ; all which only served to confirm my condemnation.'

The next day he attended Rich's levée, and was kept waiting in an outer room for a considerable time, when at last the Woffington — who was a woman in all things, and resented, with right feminine indignation, the insult which she believed he had given her — swept through the apartment without a word, courtesy, or even an inclination of her head, and proceeded to her sedan ; from which, acting on second thoughts, she hastily returned, and advancing towards the youth with queenlike steps, and eyes that flashed with resentment, said, ' Mr. Wilkinson, I have made a visit this morning to Mr. Rich, to insist on his not giving you any engagement whatever. Your impudence to me last night, where you had with such assurance placed yourself, is one proof of your ignorance ; added to that, I heard you echo my voice when I was acting, and I sincerely hope, in whatever barn you are suffered as an unworthy stroller, that you will fully experience the same contempt you dared last night to offer me.'

‘Without waiting or permitting me to reply,’ says Wilkinson, ‘she darted once more to her chair. I really was so astonished, frightened, and bewildered that I knew not how to act or think.’

When he saw the manager, later on, that worthy said to him, ‘Muster Whittington, you are unfit for the stage, and I won’t larn you — you may go, Mr. Whittington.’ ‘And,’ adds Wilkinson, ‘he stroked his favourite cat.’

This burst of indignation showered on the head of a saucy young jackanapes, whom Peg Woffington believed had openly insulted her, and who was no doubt more guilty than he confessed, lasted but a little while ; and when next he mentions her name, he speaks of her manner softening towards him. Her heart was far too large and generous, her nature too genial, to harbour petty revenge.

Tate Wilkinson was indeed a precocious youth, who soon became vastly proud of his imitations, which, he says somewhat egotistically, ‘when really produced upon the stage, were thought superior to Mr. Garrick’s or Mr. Foote’s. For those particular actors or actresses whose manner and voice I so strongly presented to the public, were taken on the truest ground, — that of feeling myself at the time the person I imi-

tated, and not exaggerated into buffoonery ; and this was my work, my toil, my constant practice for some years before I played in London. I had so habituated myself to this fluctuation of voice, and to move and change my features to those of the actors and actresses I judged myself personating, that from impulsive enthusiasm — for I cannot think of another word — I felt as if each individual I spoke and acted like, were at that instant under the restrictions and reverence due to a real audience of the most collected and fashionable consequence.'

His love for approbation, indeed, outgrew his discretion ; for presently we find him mimicking not only Peg Woffington, but the greatest lights of the stage, to their very faces. The first actor whom he selected to favour with a personation which held the mirror up to Nature, was Foote, who had heretofore been considered unapproachable in this line, and was, as a consequence, dreaded, not only by those of his own profession, but by all men of distinction, who lived in daily and hourly apprehension of being held up to public laughter by the famous wit. Yet, as it so often happens with those who delight in imitating and burlesquing the marked characteristics of their friends, the mimic's own peculiarities were, we are assured 'more extravagant than any

person's whose gait, or gesture, or history he might choose to record or divert himself with.'

It happened when Samuel Foote was going to fulfil an engagement in Dublin, he told young Wilkinson — to whom he had been introduced by Garrick — he would be very glad of his company, to help to divert the town; and that he would 'fix him on genteel terms' with Sheridan. This proposal Wilkinson, whose engagement with Garrick had not yet commenced, avows, 'was a cheering cordial elixir to my drooping spirits, and to my still more drooping pockets.' He therefore accompanied Foote to the Irish capital; where the great wit and mimic was about to give his entertainment called 'Tea,' in which he appeared as Mr. Puzzle, the instructor; and Wilkinson, or as it was announced upon the bills, 'A Young Gentleman who never appeared on any stage before,' as his 'First Pupil.' For this performance there was no rehearsal, it being arranged that Wilkinson should appear when called upon, and give such imitations of well-known characters as pleased him best. At eight o'clock on this evening, when he was to make his first bow to the public, he was in full dress behind the scenes. The company were all strangers to him, and were not prepared to receive him with much civility; for if he were a

blockhead, he was not worth their notice ; and if an impudent mimic, bred by Foote in his worthy art, he was certainly a despicable intruder. He, therefore, feeling his company was not desirable, left his solitary seat in the green room, and went onto the stage, when, looking through a hole in the curtain, he beheld a most crowded and splendid audience, such, as he says, ‘ might strike the boldest with dismay.’ Moreover, this assembly looked forward with some curiosity to the first appearance of a young gentleman whose talents as a mimic, and whose position as the son of a clergyman on whom sentence of transportation had been pronounced, had become topics of general conversation in the city.

Presently the farce began, and Foote gained great applause and created roars of laughter. ‘ In the second act my time of trial drew near,’ writes the younger mimic ; ‘ in about ten minutes I was called. “ Mr. Wilkinson ! Mr. Wilkinson ! ” Had I obeyed a natural impulse, I was really so alarmed that I should have run away. But honour pricked me on, there was no alternative, my brain was a chaos ; but on I went. I must have made a very timid, sheepish appearance. I trembled like a frightened clown in a pantomime, which, Foote, perceiving, good-na-

turedly took me by the hand and led me forward, when the burst of applause was wonderful ; but it could not instantly remove my timidity, and I had no prompter to trust to, as all depended on myself. Foote, perceiving I was not fit for action, said, " This young gentleman is merely a novice on the stage, he has not been properly drilled. But come, my young friend, walk across the stage ; breathe yourself and show your figure." I did so ; the walk encouraged me, and another loud applause succeeded. I felt a glow which seemed to say, " What have you to fear ? Now or never. This is the night that either makes you or undoes you quite." I mustered up courage, and began with the imitation of Mr. Sparks. The audience were struck with the forcible manner of the speaking and the striking resemblance of the features, a particular excellence in my mode of mimicry. The applause resounded even to my astonishment, and the audience were equally amazed, as they found something where they, in fact, expected nothing. Next speech was Barry in Alexander. I now found myself vastly elated and clever ; fear was vanished, and joy and pleasure succeeded, — a proof what barometers we are, how soon elated, how soon depressed. When quite at ease, I began with Mrs. Woffington in *Lady Macbeth*,

and Barry in Macbeth. The laughter was so loud and incessant that I could not proceed. This was a minute of luxury ; I was then in the regions of bliss ; I was encored. A sudden thought occurred ; I felt all hardy, all alert, all nerve, and immediately advanced six steps, and before I spoke, I received the full testimony of true imitation. My master, as he was called, sat on the stage at the same time ; I repeated twelve or fourteen lines of the very prologue he had spoken that night. I, before Mr. Foote, presented his other self. His manner, his voice, his oddities, I so exactly hit that the pleasure, the glee it gave may easily be conceived to see and hear the mimic mimicked ; and it really gave me a complete victory over Mr. Foote, for the suddenness of the action tripped up his audacity so much that he, with all his effrontery, sat foolish, wishing to appear equally pleased with the audience, but knew not how to play the difficult part. He was unprepared, the surprise and satisfaction was such that, without any conclusion, the curtain was obliged to drop with reiterated bursts of applause.'

At this piece of audacity Foote was vastly piqued and chagrined. But he who had so unsparingly ridiculed his friends and foes alike, whether in the pulpit, or on the stage, or at the

bar, dared not openly complain of now meeting with treatment like unto theirs. He therefore sought to conceal his feelings, and merely remarked to Wilkinson that this was decidedly his worst imitation. At the end of six weeks Foote was obliged to leave Dublin, to fulfil a London engagement, and Wilkinson was left behind in the enjoyment of a salary of three guineas a week from Sheridan. For a couple of months he continued to delight the town, and drew crowded houses, much to Sheridan's satisfaction. Now in order to give more variety to the entertainment, Sheridan, when Wilkinson called on him at his own house one night, suggested that instead of mimicking the London actors and actresses as he had done, he would exhibit the manners of the players then engaged in his company. This Wilkinson refused, urging that his mimicry would so incense the performers that they would insult him, and refuse to play for him when his benefit came round. But these considerations had no influence with Sheridan, who repeated the request more eagerly, and was vexed at its being declined. Wilkinson then hit on what he considered a bright idea.

'My dear sir,' said he to the manager, in a confidential tone, 'a thought has just entered my head, which I think will draw money and

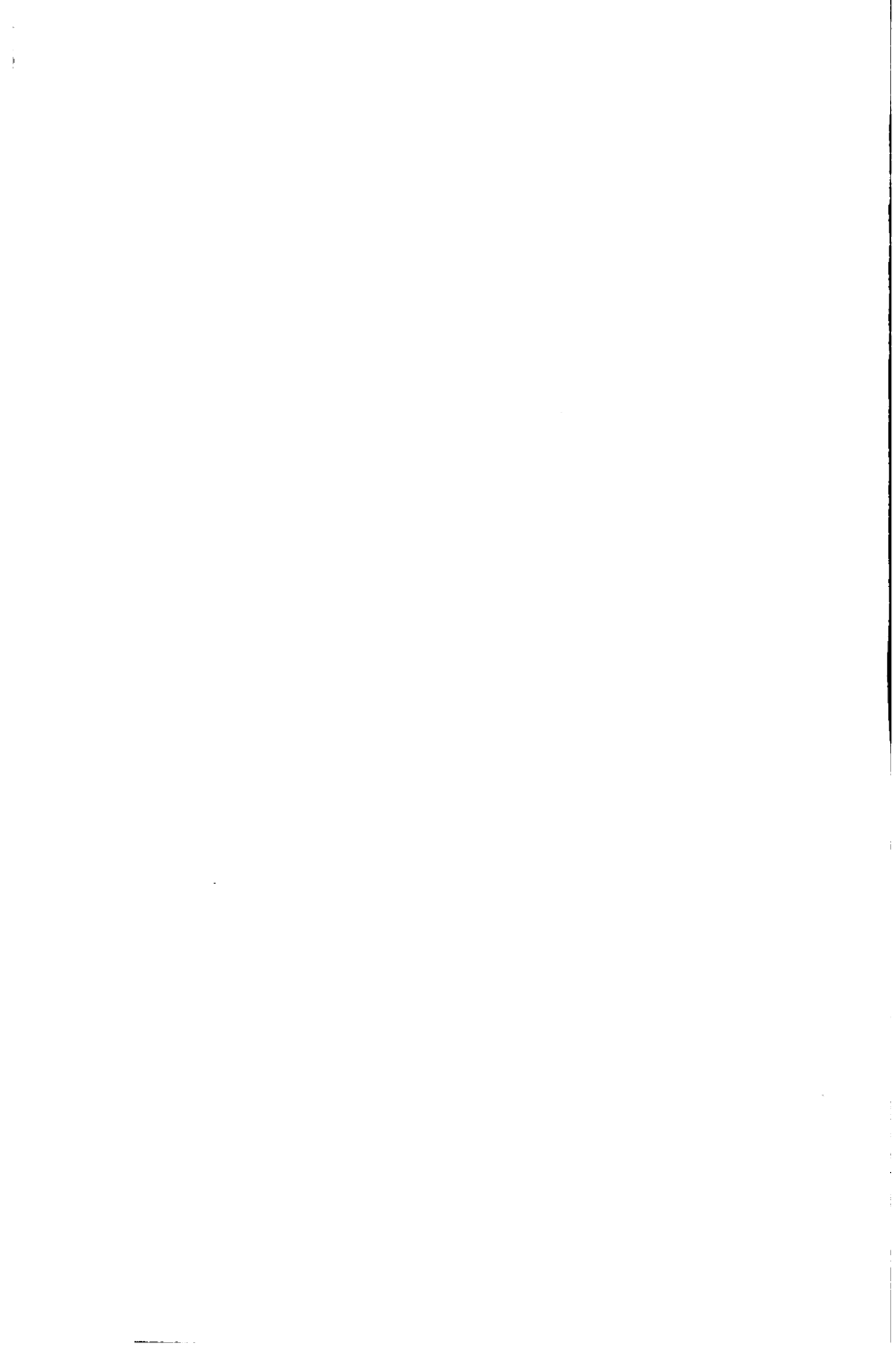


be of infinite service to myself.' Sheridan asked him, with the utmost eagerness, what it was. 'Why, sir,' said the precocious youth, 'your rank in the theatre, and a gentleman so well known in Dublin on and off the stage, must naturally occasion any striking imitation of yourself to have a wonderful effect. I have paid great attention to your whole mode of acting, not only since I have come here, but when you played the whole season at Covent Garden Theatre, and actually think I can do a great deal on your stage with you *alone*, without interfering with any other actor's manner whatever.'

The effect of this suggestion on Sheridan was marvellous. 'Hogarth's pencil could not testify more astonishment,' says Wilkinson. 'He turned pale and red alternately, his lips quivered; I instantaneously saw I was in the wrong box. It was some time before he could speak; he took a candle from off the table, and showing me the room door — when at last his words found utterance — said he never was so insulted. What! to be taken off by a buffoon upon his own stage! And as to mimicry, what is it? Why, a proceeding which he never could countenance; that he even despised Garrick and Foote for introducing so mean an art; and he then very politely desired me to walk down-



TATE WILKINSON.



stairs. I was obliged to march, and really felt petrified with my bright thought, which had turned out so contrary from what I had ignorantly expected. Mr. Sheridan held the candle for me only till I got to the first landing, and then hastily removed it, grumbling and squeaking to himself, and leaving me to feel my way in the dark down a pair and a half of steep stairs, and to guess my road, in hopes of finding the street-door.'

But even this experience did not serve to teach Wilkinson that imitation is not always the sincerest flattery. The next actor whom he gave an imitation of before his face, was Garrick, whom, the young mimic admits, 'certainly was the most universal great actor the world ever produced.' On his return to England, Wilkinson played in the provinces, and was engaged subsequently to appear as one of the Drury Lane company, for the season commencing September, 1758; though on what date, or in what character, it did not please Mr. Garrick to inform him. One day, whilst he was yet in suspense as to his appearance on the stage of Drury Lane, he was walking down James Street, when he heard a voice call after him repeatedly. Turning round, he saw Foote, whom he had not met since his return from Ireland. The elder

mimic greeted him cordially ; ‘and sure,’ says Wilkinson, ‘if ever one person possessed the talents of pleasing more than another, Mr. Foote was certainly the man.’ Away he went with Foote to dinner, for the wit, whenever he had money, kept an open table, loved good company, and drank most excellent wine. When they had dined, as pleasantly as might be, and the claret was circulating, Foote informed him he was to play at Drury Lane in a short time, and then expressed his anxiety as to what Wilkinson had been doing since last they met ; whereon the youth told him his story, which he ended by stating he had signed an agreement to join Garrick’s company, but that gentleman would not tell him in what part he was to play.

Hearing which, Foote, who had as little love for Garrick as Garrick entertained for him, replied, ‘ You must, Wilkinson, plainly see, and be convinced, that dirty hound Garrick does not mean to do you any service, or wish you any success ; but on the contrary, he is a secret enemy, and if he can prevent your doing well, be assured he will. I know his heart so well, that if you give me permission to ask for your first attempt on his stage to be in my piece, the hound will certainly refuse the moment I mention it. And though his little soul would

rejoice to act Richard the Third in the dog days, before the hottest kitchen-fire for a sop in the pan, yet I know his mean soul so perfectly, that if, on his refusal, I, with a grave face, tell him I have his figure exactly made and dressed as a puppet in my closet, ready for public admiration, the fellow will not only consent to your acting, but what is more extraordinary, his abject fears will make him lend me money, if I should say I want it.'

Wilkinson readily agreeing to Foote's proposal that they should both play in the same piece, Garrick, who greatly feared the wit, gave his consent to the arrangement; and in due time, the 'Diversions of the Morning' was performed at Drury Lane Theatre; the principal characters by Mr. Foote and Mr. Wilkinson. The diversions were caused by the instructions of Mr. Puzzle to his pupils in the art of acting, or in other words, of mimicry. Now amongst those who suffered most from the efforts of this master and his pupil, were the Covent Garden players, who were considered fair game for their scathing ridicule. Amongst them was one in particular, an actor named Sparks, whose mannerisms had served as an excellent butt for Wilkinson when he played in Dublin, and now vastly delighted London town. It was one day

said that Sparks was so hurt by the mimicry that he had taken to his bed, and was dangerously ill; a report that Foote contradicted, for he declared he had met Mrs. Sparks going home with two pounds of mutton-chops on a skewer for her husband's dinner.

Sparks was, however, mightily hurt by this ridicule, and waited on Garrick to protest against such unhandsome usage, and request that the great Mr. Garrick would not suffer him, as a man of credit in private life, and an actor of estimation in public, to be destroyed by such an illiberal attack on his livelihood.

'Why, now — hey, Sparks,' said Garrick, with his usual hesitation; said to be the result of affectation, and a fear of being led into promises which he never meant to perform. 'Why, Wilkinson — and be damned to him — they say he takes me off, and he takes Foote off — and so, you see, you are in very good company.'

'Very true, sir,' said Sparks, bluntly, 'but many an honest man has been ruined by keeping too good company;' saying which, he at once took his departure.

At noon, Garrick went to Drury Lane, paraded up and down the stage in seeming agitation, called all his actors round him, and then sent for Wilkinson, whom he rated soundly,

pretending to have the greatest abhorrence of an art which he had practised at the outset of his career to the indignation of many.

‘Now, hey, damn it, Wilkinson,’ said he, ‘why will you take a liberty with these gentlemen, the players, and without my consent. You never consulted or told me who you were to take off, as you call it. Hey, now, that is, I say — but you and Foote, and Foote and you, think you are managers of this theatre. But to convince you of the contrary — and be damned to ye — I here order you, before these gentlemen, to desist from taking any liberty with any one of Covent Garden Theatre. I do not allow myself such unbecoming liberties, nor will I permit them from another, where I am manager; and if you dare to repeat such a mode of conduct after my commands, I will fine you the penalty of your article.’

To this speech, which was merely intended for the benefit of his company, Kitty Clive must join her voice.

‘Fie, fie, young man! fie, fie!’ said Kitty; adding that it was impudent and shocking for a young fellow to gain applause at the expense of the players. ‘Now,’ said she, ‘I can, and do myself take off, but then it is only the Mingotti, and a set of Italian squalling devils who come



over to England to get our bread from us; and I say, curse them all for a set of Italian hounds.'

Presently in came Foote, singing a snatch of a French song, 'to show his good breeding;' on which Garrick laid bare the matter before him, and told him that from motives of humanity and consideration he was resolved to put a stop to Wilkinson's proceedings. 'If indeed now,' said the liberal manager, 'he could have taken me off; why, now, as to that, I should have liked it vastly, and so would Mrs. Garrick;' but he insisted that the Covent Garden players should be let alone. To the great surprise of Wilkinson, who was not familiar with the ways of managers, Foote seconded all Garrick had said, and the young mimic was much cast down. Therefore, when night came, he prepared to act only the part of Bounce in the farce, without giving any imitations. But when this was finished, there was a great call for the mimicry with which he had usually favoured the house; Garrick and Foote having planted many people in the theatre for the purpose.

The clamour continuing, Garrick ordered the lights to be let down, 'which consisted of six chandeliers hanging over the stage, every one containing twelve candles in brass sockets, and a heavy iron, flourished and joined to each

bottom, large enough for a street palisade. This ceremony being complied with, Mr. Garrick said it would, with the lamps also lowered, be a convincing proof to the audience that all was over.' They, however, refused to stir, but called louder than before for Wilkinson, and caused a great tumult. Then Foote, who had been standing at perfect ease at the wings, enjoying the sport, came forward, and made a vastly polite speech. He was exceedingly sorry to have given cause for any disturbance. He begged to assure them that Mr. Wilkinson's performance had been introduced by way of entertainment, and not with intentions to injure any individual whatever. Indeed, a harmless laugh was all to which the young gentleman had aspired. Mr. Wilkinson had desired him to remit his grateful acknowledgments for the kind indulgence with which they had honoured him, and regretted that what had been intended to divert had been misconstrued into wickedness. For Mr. Garrick and he, Mr. Foote, had received remonstrances and cruel reflections from certain performers, who alleged that they suffered in their reputations from the imitations. Therefore Mr. Garrick and himself had, from motives of generosity, yielded to such importunity and allegations, and had cheerfully sacri-

ficed that part of the entertainment, for the sake of affording peace and happiness to others, an act which he trusted would meet with the approbation of the audience, whose favour it would ever be their study to merit and obtain.

This pretty speech was treated with anger and contempt ; the audience were not to be denied their diversions for the sake of the tender feelings of any player ; and therefore called aloud, again and again, for Wilkinson. Foote now rushed into the green room, and told Wilkinson he must immediately go on the stage.

‘ And what must I do when I am there ? ’ said the youth, who felt completely bewildered.

‘ Anything,’ replied Foote. ‘ Do what you like ; and treat them to as much of me as you please, only come on at once.’

‘ What does Mr. Garrick say ? ’ asked the mimic. ‘ For without his orders I cannot proceed,’ and he turned to the manager.

‘ Hey, why, now, hey,’ said Garrick. ‘ Why, now, as they insist, I really do not see that I am bound to run the hazard of having a riot in my theatre to please Sparks and the rest of the Covent Garden people ; and if they are not satisfied with your serving up Mr. Foote as a dish, why it is a pity — as I to-day observed — but you could give me. But that, you say, is

not possible, with any hopes of success. Why, now, haste, they are making a devilish noise ; and so, as you have begun your damned taking off, why go on with it, and do what comes into your head ; and do not plague me with your cursed tricks again.'

Wilkinson took him at his word ; went on the stage, and after mimicking Foote, next proceeded to give a representation of the great Mr. Garrick. The audience were at first vastly surprised, then immensely tickled, and finally so delighted that they filled the house with loud acclamations. Garrick was terribly astonished, and being ever sensitive to the slightest ridicule, was highly incensed, so much so, indeed, that for the remainder of the season 'he never deigned,' says Wilkinson, 'to let his eye grace me with its observance, and of course not a single word ever came to comfort me from his royal lips ; all conveyed, whenever I met him, austerity, anger, and dislike.' But Tate Wilkinson's imitations of Foote and Garrick by no means ended here. Indeed, these actors — who by their mimicry had been for years the plague of numbers and the dread of each other — now, by a just judgment, looked with fear and trembling on this youth who was capable of holding them up to the laughter of the town. When

Wilkinson's engagement terminated at Drury Lane, Garrick was by no means anxious to renew it, and the mimic went adventuring in the provinces, where he met with great success. But presently, being at Winchester, he 'steered once more for dear London, to see what was going on in the great world.'

On the morning of his departure from Winchester, he received a present of a hamper containing Bury pears and other fruits, from my Lord Tavistock, an admirer of his talents, and a kindly nobleman withal. When the clever youth arrived in town, he bought a fine hare, and adding it to the hamper, sent them to Rich as a genteel present worthy of his acceptance. The worthy manager was flattered by this attention, and in return invited Wilkinson to dine with him; a favour he declined, but he subsequently presented himself at one of the great harlequin's morning levées. Rich received him with a vast show of civility, and expressed himself delighted with the success the young fellow had recently achieved.

'Why, Muster Williamskin,' said he, it being one of this eccentric man's peculiarities to mispronounce all surnames, 'you are much improved since I first began to *larn* you. I think I must engage you. Name your own terms.'

An agreement was promptly arrived at, and Wilkinson proposed that 'The Minor' should be placed on the Covent Garden stage. This was a three-act farce, written by Foote, in which the author had mimicked Whitfield, the preacher Langford, the auctioneer, and a certain lady known to the gay part of the town as Mother Douglas. Wilkinson of course determined to give such representations of Foote as would set the whole town in a roar. To this proposition Rich at once consented, and requested Wilkinson to cast the parts; on which the latter selected Sparks to play Richard Wealthy, a prominent character. Now this actor, remembering how he had been mimicked at Drury Lane, declared he was by no means willing 'to perform, or assist in any piece for the advantage of a villain who, unprovoked, had endeavoured to hurt him in his peace of mind, and injure his reputation as an actor with the public.'

These were wrathful words indeed; but Wilkinson was resolved to appease the man who had uttered them. He therefore explained that it was by the artifices of Foote and Garrick he had been forced to give such imitations at Drury Lane; and that during his engagement at Covent Garden he had no intention of mimicking any

actors but Foote and Garrick, whose treatment of him, he considered, justified his resolution. Sparks, on hearing this, became pacified; and as he, in common with many others, cherished an old grudge against these mimics, whom he accused of meanness and ingratitude, he accepted the part for which he was cast, and moreover, promised Wilkinson every assistance in his power. The farce was, accordingly, put in rehearsal, and all went well until the rumour of their intentions reached Foote's ears, when it caused him the greatest possible alarm.

He who had spared neither friend nor foe, neither host nor guest, shrank from the ridicule which now threatened him, and determined to protest against it with might and main. So it happened one morning, whilst Rich, Wilkinson, and Sparks were holding a council of war in the manager's house, that a thundering rap at the door made them jump from their seats, whilst the bell rang in the most alarming manner imaginable. Immediately after a servant entered the room where they three sat, saying Mr. Foote had come to wait on Mr. Rich. The manager went down to his visitor, who greeted his appearance with a storm of abuse.

'Damn it, you old hound,' he shouted vigorously, 'if you dare let Wilkinson, that pug-



MR. FOOTE AS MRS. COLE.





nosed dog, take any liberty with me as to mimicry, I will bring you yourself, Rich, on the stage. If you want to engage that pug, black his face, and let him hand a tea-kettle in a pantomime. If he dares to appear in my character in "The Minor," I will instantly produce your old, stupid, ridiculous self, with your cats and your hound of a mimic, altogether, next week at Drury Lane, for the general diversion of the pit, boxes, and galleries; and that will be paying you, you squinting old Hecate, too great a compliment.' Saying which, the great mimic darted out of the house in a violent passion.

When he had departed, Rich went back to his friends with a most woeful countenance. 'Why, Muster Sparkish,' said he, disconsolately, 'Muster Footeye has declared, if I let Muster Williamskin act his parts or mimic him on the stage, he will write parts for me, my cats, and Muster Williamskin, and bring us all out at Drury Lane. So we must not act what we intended.' To which Sparks made reply, 'Why, surely, sir,' said he, 'you cannot be so weak as to let Mr. Foote's vapouring visit frighten you from your purpose, or intimidate you from having a piece acted that may be of service to your theatre, and to this young gentleman.'

Rich was yet frightened, and Sparks went on

to say it was truly strange and laughable that Foote, of all people, should confess himself mortified at the prospect of being mimicked, he who had been for years 'an universal torturer and spoiler of private peace, from licentious liberties he had taken.'

Rich was, however, still apprehensive of Foote. 'I believe,' says Wilkinson, 'he dreaded an affront on his favourite cat more than on himself.' In due time, however, he consented to the production of 'The Minor,' and a brilliant and crowded audience assembled to see Wilkinson's imitations. He mimicked Foote 'from top to toe,' as he tells us; 'and as to Mr. Garrick, I made no scruple.' One night Garrick sat in one of the boxes of Covent Garden Theatre, to see his counterfeit presentment, drawn thither by curiosity, or by a desire to appear indifferent to ridicule. Presently, when the young jackanapes recited some lines from Macbeth in the manner of the great actor, the cry, 'Garrick! 'Tis Garrick,' rang through the house.

'From that night,' says Wilkinson, 'he never forgave nor forgot, nor did he ever speak to me again to the day of his death.'

## CHAPTER VII.

Spranger Barry. — His *Début* in Dublin. — Arrival in London. — His Personal Beauty and Sweetness of Voice. — Plays at Drury Lane. — His Personation of Othello. — Dissatisfied with Garrick. — Goes to Covent Garden. — The Rival Romeos. — The Rival Juliets. — Excitement of the Town. — Tragedies Produced by Garrick. — Monsieur Jean Naverre. — The Chinese Festival. — George II. at the Playhouse. — His Impressions of Richard III. — Riot at Drury Lane.

MEANWHILE Garrick continued to attract and delight the town, constantly affording his audiences variety by the introduction of tragedies and comedies selected from old, or accepted from contemporary, authors. But with all his careful management, inimitable acting, and great reputation, he was not without a rival, who at one time threatened to deprive the great theatrical monarch of his throne.

This was Spranger Barry, the descendant of an old Irish family, and the son of a Dublin silversmith. He himself had, indeed, been for some time engaged in that trade, which was as uncongenial to his tastes as it was unprofitable to his pocket. All his desires tending towards the stage, which his fine physical gifts were so cal-

culated to adorn, he at the age of four and twenty became an actor, and made his *début* as Othello at Smock Alley Theatre in the winter of 1743. He literally fascinated the town, as much by his singularly handsome presence and the rare sweetness of his voice, as by the force of his acting. In a little while the noise of his reputation crossed the Channel, and three years from the date of his first appearance he was engaged by Lacey to play at Drury Lane. On his arrival in London, Charles Macklin extended the hand of friendship to his young countryman, gave him some lessons in elocution, and showed him the curiosities of the town. Walking with his mentor in St. James's Park, Barry's agreeable presence attracted universal attention; and on Macklin being asked who his companion was, he replied, with a twinkle in his eye, 'Why, it's a young Irish nobleman, — the Earl of Munster.' The story was believed, and when Barry made his bow in Drury Lane, half his audience were convinced an Irish peer had turned player. The sensation he had made in Dublin was surpassed by that which he created in the greater capital; according to Murphy, he 'blazed out' upon the stage, and 'gave delight to the metropolis.' Few actors had gained such an enthusiastic reception. Full six feet high, commanding in

figure, of an aristocratic bearing, Barry was considered the perfection of physical beauty; whilst his voice, clear and singularly musical, gained him the title of 'the silver-tongued,' for as Rich said, 'he could wheedle a bird off a tree.' Murphy bears testimony that he was 'certainly one of the handsomest men in Europe;' whilst it is again affirmed of him and Peg Woffington 'that for mere human beauty, they have never been surpassed.'

Though Barry eschewed that deep study and patient care which enabled Garrick to bring his gifts to maturity, yet by reason of his great sensibility and natural tact, he was perhaps the more effective player. Barry felt the force and pathos of every line he spoke; Garrick could on leaving an audience bathed in tears make jokes at the wings which convulsed his hearers with laughter. The whole town was enthusiastic concerning this new actor. Garrick freely acknowledged him 'the best lover upon the stage;' whilst Davies adds his opinion that, 'in scenes of love, tenderness, and all the mingled passions of the soul,' he was not inferior to the great Montford. Amongst those who witnessed him play Othello on the night of his first appearance at Drury Lane was old Colley Cibber, who afterwards went about declaring that this

young man's Othello was superior to the immortal Betterton's ; and no higher meed of praise could he bestow.

His performance of this part was indeed remarkable ; Kirkman says it was ' amazingly great, for he rose through all the passions of this character to the utmost extent of central imagination.' The public had seen Quin, with his clumsy figure and heavy declamation, play this part in a big powdered wig, and with a black face, which made ' such a magpie appearance of his head ' as tended more to produce laughter than tears. Garrick had also played the Moor, but had not succeeded in the part to his satisfaction or that of his friends. He had as Othello worn a Moorish dress, which served to make his figure smaller than it really was. After witnessing the play one night, a friend of Quin's hastened to describe Garrick's personation to the sturdy old actor.

' Why, you must be mistaken, my dear sir,' said Quin, when he had heard him ; ' the little man could not appear as the Moor ; he must rather have looked like Desdemona's little black boy that attends her tea-kettle.'

Now, however, when Barry played the part, the town paid him the highest compliment possible by stating that it recognised for the first



ARTHUR MURPHY.





time the probability of Desdemona falling in love with such a Moor as he represented.

‘In Othello,’ says Arthur Murphy, ‘he was master of the quick vicissitudes of love, of grief, of rage, and tenderness ; and in the conflict, or as Shakespeare has it, in the tempest and whirlwind of the passions, his voice was harmony in an uproar.’ So realistic, indeed, was his passion, so expressive his jealousy, that when he delivered the line, ‘I’ll tear her all to pieces,’ many women screamed with terror ; whilst the last scene, in which Desdemona is done to death, made the whole house shudder.

In some other personations he was almost, if not equally, successful. Garrick, having once seen him play Orestes, never after attempted that part in London. His Alexander was pronounced inimitable, and his Romeo, the perfection of love-making. In most of the characters he personated, he was indeed successful. ‘All exquisitely tender or touching writing,’ says an anonymous contemporary critic, ‘came mended from his mouth. There was a pathos, a sweetness, a delicacy in his utterance which stole upon the mind, and forced conviction on the memory. Every sentiment of honour and virtue, recommended to the ear by the language of the author, was riveted to the heart by the utterance of Barry.’

In private life he was scarcely less lauded than in public. He was caressed for his beauty by women of quality, sought after for his conviviality by men of distinction, and courted for the excellency of his parts by society in general. In return, he entertained the town with a magnificence which, if suited to his elegant manners and superb tastes, far outstripped his income. As an instance of his extravagance and love of ostentation, it may be mentioned that when his friend, Henry Pelham the prime minister, invited himself to sup with him, Barry entertained him with a princely banquet. 'I could not have given a more splendid supper myself,' said the minister, who was by no means pleased with the profession; and he never sat at the actor's table again. To crown all, Frederick Prince of Wales honoured him with his patronage, and advised him to take lessons in dancing from his favourite Desnoyers, by way of gaining additional ease and grace in his movements; and Barry judiciously complying with the hint, the prince at once extended his friendship to the great actor.

Such triumphs, so freely awarded, both socially and professionally, might have undone the wisest man. They served after a short time to make Barry, if not jealous of Garrick



MR. BARRY AS TIMON.



as a rival, at least dissatisfied with him as a manager; and he therefore left Drury Lane. According to Boaden, the new actor 'began to grow spoiled by success, and was frequently absent from his duty under the plea of bad health. He assured the public, by advertisement, that "he scorned all trick and evasion, and that nothing but real illness had, or should ever, oblige him to decline his duty as an actor." He, however, could no longer bear to be second, where it was yet impossible he should be first.' Barry complained that he was called upon to act at improper seasons and on unlucky days; such as when a woman of quality had summoned a prodigious company to a concert of music or a rout, or upon an opera night, or when some public assembly was announced, which prevented his having a good audience. Then Garrick, according to Davies, desired him to choose his own days. 'Very well,' said Barry, 'this is all I can ask.' 'But even that compliance,' says Garrick's biographer, 'did not produce the desired effect. Garrick's Hamlet still drew greater crowds than Barry's; but this, indeed, was a misfortune which Garrick was not anxious to remove.' Charles Macklin, in speaking of Barry's departure from the Drury Lane company, speaks of it as 'one of those revolutions which take

place in theatrical affairs,' and adds that ' Barry, disgusted with being under the control of a rival — who certainly had it in his power not to show him fair play — revolted to Rich.' Moreover, Mrs. Cibber, who had, since the departure of Peg Woffington, played the principal female parts at Drury Lane, likewise rebelled, and went over to the opposition playhouse.

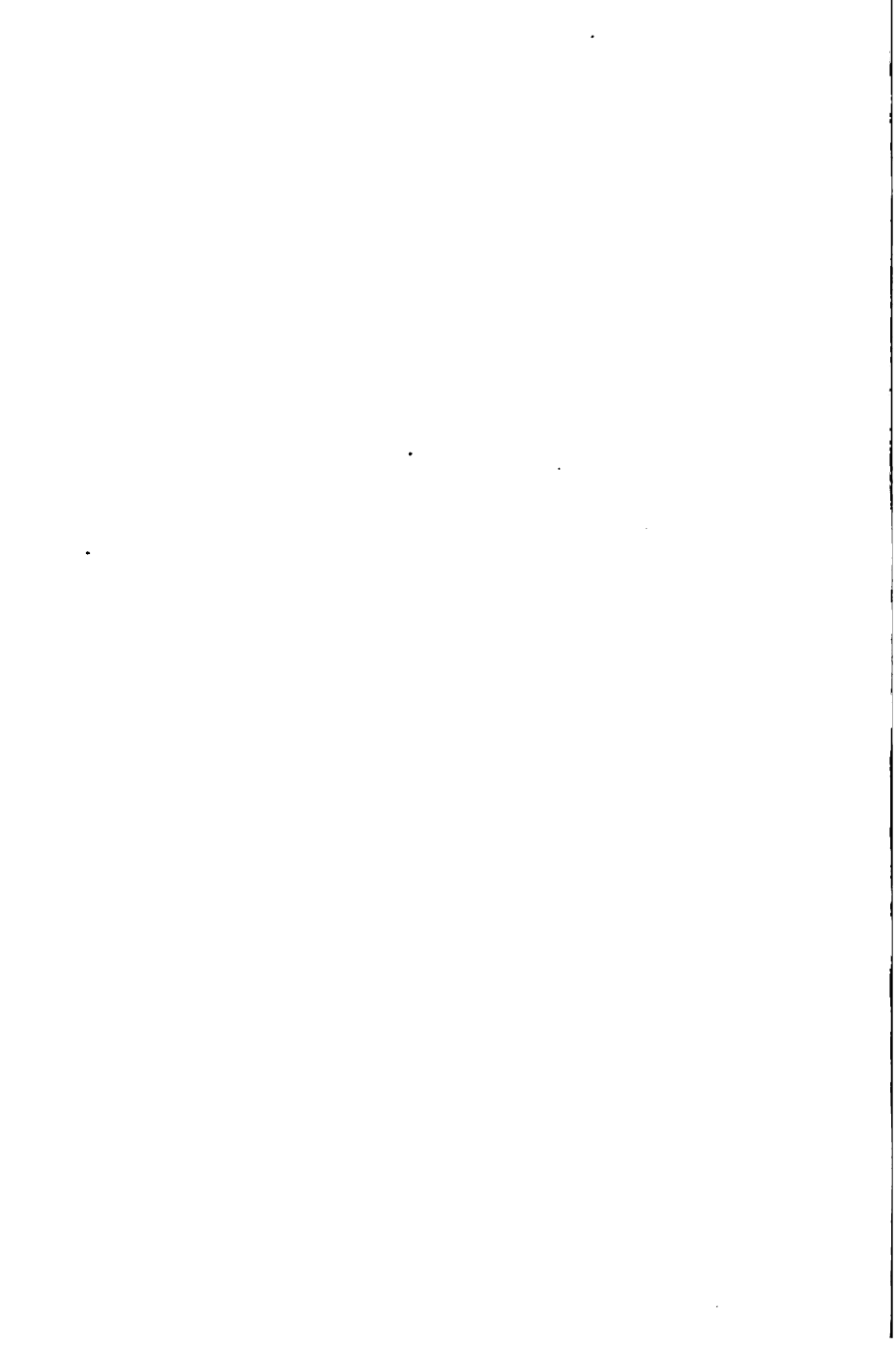
Accordingly, when the theatrical season of 1750 commenced, the two great rivals divided the attention and favour of the town; and it was plain to all they were prepared for deadly combat. Garrick was in himself a tower of strength, and could boast a company which included Mrs. Pritchard, Kitty Clive, and Woodward, three excellent players, together with George Anne Bellamy, whom he had selected to replace Mrs. Cibber; for which purpose he had given her an excellent training during the previous summer months. Rich, on the other hand, numbered not only Barry, but Peg Woffington, Mrs. Cibber, Quin, and Macklin among his troupe, a prodigiously strong body withal.

On the 8th of September, Garrick opened Drury Lane with ' The Merchant of Venice ; ' when ' an occasional prologue,' by the manager, was spoken by Kitty Clive. In this he struck



KITTY KLIVE.





the key-note of the feelings which actuated both houses : —

‘ Strengthened by new allies, our foes prepare,  
“ Cry havock, and let slip the dogs of war.”  
To shake our souls, the papers of the day  
Draw forth the adverse bands in dread array ;  
A power might shake the boldest with dismay.  
Yet, fearless still, we take the field with spirit,  
Armed cap-a-pie, in self-sufficient merit.’

On the twenty-fourth of the same month, Covent Garden began its season, with Macklin in ‘ *The Miser*.’ Four nights later, however, the grand battle was commenced, when ‘ *Romeo and Juliet* ’ was announced for performance at both houses.

Romeo was Barry’s favourite character, and as Juliet, Mrs. Cibber most excelled. They had both been carefully trained by Garrick in their respective parts as the hero and heroine of this tragedy ; which when acted by them during the previous season at the Lane had drawn large and appreciative audiences. The play was therefore regarded by Barry as his trump card, which he now, eagerly and with a certainty of success, flung down in the face of his great rival. Garrick, however, was not taken unawares. Anticipating this challenge, he had secretly prepared for it ; had carefully studied Romeo, and instructed Miss Bellamy in

the part of Juliet, and was therefore ready and willing to accept this open contest. Accordingly, on the first announcement of the performance of the tragedy at Rich's theatre, he likewise advertised it for the same night at Drury Lane. The Covent Garden bill promised much, and ran as follows: —

BY THE COMPANY OF COMEDIANS.

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AT THE THEATRE ROYAL IN COVENT GARDEN.  
To-morrow, September 28, will be presented a Play, call'd

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The Part of ROMEO to be performed by Mr. BARRY.  
(Being the first time of his appearing on that stage )  
And the Part of JULIET to be performed by Mrs. CIBBER.  
An additional scene will be introduced, representing

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION OF JULIET.

Which will be accompanied with a solemn DIRGE never  
performed before, and set to music by Mr. Arne,  
With the proper Decorations incident to the Play.  
Boxes, 5s. ; Pit, 3s. ; First Gallery, 2s. ; Upper Gallery, 1s.  
To begin exactly at Six o'clock.

Rich, who delighted in theatrical displays, was resolved that the funeral procession should take the town. Garrick, though too shrewd a manager to neglect such an attraction, made no mention of it, but let it come as a surprise to

his audience. The Drury Lane bill was as follows : —

BY HIS MAJESTY'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS.

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AT THE THEATRE ROYAL IN DRURY LANE.

This day, September 28, will be revived a Play, call'd

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The Part of ROMEO to be performed by Mr. GARRICK.  
(*Being the first time of his appearing in that character.*)

The Part of MERCUTIO by Mr. WOODWARD,  
And the Part of JULIET to be performed by Miss  
BELLAMY.

(Being the first time of her appearing on that stage.)

With proper Decorations.

Boxes, 5s. ; Pit, 3s. ; Gallery, 2s. ; Upper Gallery, 1s.

It is hop'd no Gentleman will take it ill that they cannot  
be admitted this Night upon the Stage, or in the  
Orchestra, on Account of the Scenery and  
Music that are made Use of in the Play.

Never had there been such a contest. Each actor had his adherents, who were equally confident of their hero's success ; and the town generally was excited, and ran in crowds to both theatres, sometimes leaving one house at the end of the first three acts, to witness the conclusion of the play at the other. Covent Garden was, during the first nights, thronged to excess ; whilst, for the greater convenience of the crowds flocking to Drury Lane, it was advertised that a passage

was opened 'from Russel Street into the boxes, where ladies and gentlemen may be set down from their Coaches, and there is likewise a better accommodation made for Chairs to come up to the house, and be kept in waiting at the End of the passage from Bridges Street.' The public was at first somewhat divided in its opinion concerning the merits of the rival Romeos and Juliets. Garrick, it was said, 'seized upon the agonies of love, and convulsed his audience with alarm, with frenzy and despair. Every look called upon the painter, every attitude upon the statuary;' but Barry touched all hearts by his pourtrayal of the gentler moods of the great passion. 'The amorous harmony of his features,' says James Kirkman, 'his melting eyes, and unequalled plaintiveness of voice, and his fine, graceful figure gave him very great superiority over Mr. Garrick in this contest. In the garden scenes of the second and fourth acts, and in the tomb scene, he was super-eminently great and affecting; indeed, he bore away the palm from Mr. Garrick in this part.'

Then, as for Miss Bellamy, the Juliet of Drury Lane, though her person was elegant, and her voice well regulated, her passion was spasmodic, and her acting lacked a finish and natural grace which Garrick's tuition was utterly

unable to supply. Mrs. Cibber, who was no less beautiful than her rival, exhibited a pathos and tenderness that stirred her hearers to tears, and charmed them beyond expression. Murphy tells us 'the expression of her countenance and the irresistible magic of her voice thrilled to the very soul of her whole audience.'

For twelve consecutive nights, the play was performed at Covent Garden, at the end of which time, Mrs. Cibber declared her health was no longer able to bear the strain of so arduous a part. Rich therefore withdrew the tragedy in favour of 'The Beggars' Opera,' which was followed by Peg Woffington's performance of Sir Harry Wildair, of which the town never seemed to tire. Garrick, however, kept the field for another night, and then produced 'a dramatic masque, call'd "Comus."' But though he had held out longer than his rival, it could not be said he had gained a victory. This he doubtlessly felt; for it is notable he never again attempted to play Romeo, whilst Barry performed in that character twenty-three times during the season, and moreover rendered it a favourite with the public as long as youth and health were left him. This may be regarded as the test of triumph. Garrick's friends were, however, not willing to admit that he had suf-

fered by the contest, and as Macklin tells us, they were anxious to compromise the matter by giving Barry the superiority in the first three acts, and Garrick in the last two. 'But,' he adds, 'this ~~first~~ did not succeed. Romeo's meeting with Paris in the tomb scene, and his last interview with Juliet were as fine specimens of Barry's abilities as any in the course of the play.'

Whilst the tragedy ran, a thousand epigrams, stories, and comparisons regarding the chief performers went the rounds of the drawing-rooms, coffee houses, and taverns. The Drury Lane hero was a modern, the Covent Garden an Arcadian, lover, it was said. Then a lady of quality declared that had she played Juliet to Garrick's Romeo, so impassioned was he, that she should have expected he would have come up to her; but had Barry been her lover, so seductive was he, that she should certainly have jumped down to him. Next a critic who favoured the Romeo of one house and the Juliet of another, said he had seen Juliet and Romeo at Covent Garden, but he had seen Romeo and Juliet at Drury Lane. Before the run ended, the town, which had at first enjoyed the contest, grew heartily sick of the play, and called out for a change in the theatrical programme;

apropos to which, the following epigram was circulated : —

“ Well, what ’s to-night ? ” says angry Ned,  
As up from bed he rouses.  
“ Romeo again ! ” He shakes his head.  
A plague on both your houses.’

Covent Garden, with its strong company, continued to hold its own against Garrick, and amongst the greatest attractions were the playing of Barry and the Woffington as Lord and Lady Townley ; Quin and the Woffington as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth ; Macklin and the Woffington as Shylock and Portia.

The next great sensation at Drury Lane was by the production of an entertainment called ‘ The Chinese Festival,’ on the stage of that theatre, five years later. Occurrences of minor interest had of course taken place meanwhile ; such as when Garrick introduced the pantomime of ‘ Queen Mab,’ remarkable for its ‘ great pomp of machinery, and everything that could help to *elevate*.’ In this performance, it may be noted that Woodward, who had played Mercutio excellently well at Drury Lane during the Romeo and Juliet contest, now took the part of a harlequin, whilst Maddox danced upon a slack wire. Soon after came the revivals of Ben Jonson’s famous comedy, ‘ Every Man in his



Humour,' judiciously altered for the modern stage; and Colley Cibber's first play, 'Love's Last Shift,' originally produced so far back as 1695.

Later on Garrick accepted a tragedy, called 'The Brothers,' from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Young, the admired author of 'Night Thoughts.' This play had been rehearsed five and twenty years previously, but had never been acted. It was now brought forward in order that the profits arising from its representation might go to the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts; a circumstance 'which did as much honour to the heart as the play itself did to the abilities of the author,' writes David Baker. It is wonderful to think that, with such a pious object in view, the prologue of the tragedy should contain such delicate sentiments as those which Kitty Clive spoke in her broadest manner, by way of accounting for its production.

'A scheme, forsooth, to benefit the nation!  
Some queer old whim of pious propagation.  
Lord! talk so here; the man must be a widgeon.  
Drury may propagate — but not religion.'

The tragedy was not a success. The learned author's diction 'occasionally swelled to a degree of tumour,' as we learn from Arthur Murphy's elegant criticism. Moreover, it was replete

with gloom ; as might indeed be expected from the writings of one who, when engaged in the labours of composition, would close the windows of his room, and sit by a lamp even at mid-day, raising his eyes from the pages before him to gaze on the skulls, bones, and instruments of death which constituted the ornaments of his study.

Not deterred by its lack of success, Garrick accepted another tragedy, called 'Boadicea,' written by Richard Glover the author of 'Leonidas ;' of whose friendship Garrick, in the days when he played at Goodman's Fields, had so proudly written to Peter the respectable wine-merchant. The most sanguine expectations were entertained of the tragedy, and never fulfilled ; for it was found much 'better adapted to give pleasure in the closet than in the theatre.'

But Garrick, having faith in his contemporaries, and much perseverance, produced yet another tragedy, which caused greater attention than its immediate predecessors. This was 'Virginia,' by the Rev. Mr. Crisp, — a scholar, a man of taste, and what is more, a friend of my Lady Coventry, to whom he had first submitted his play. Her ladyship was not learned. It was sufficient for her and her lord that she

was beautiful ; but that she might have some idea as to the merits of Mr. Crisp's tragedy, 'in blank song,' she lent it to friends on whose nice judgment she could depend. These declared it delighted them beyond expression ; hearing which, the charming countess, full of enthusiasm, drove in her coach to Garrick's door, and sent him word she had a moment's business with him. Whereon the great actor came and stood uncovered by her side.

'There, Mr. Garrick,' said my lady, 'I put into your hands a play which the best judges tell me will do honour to you and the author.'

'It was not necessary,' writes Arthur Murphy, 'for her to say more.

"Those eyes that tell us what the sun is made of"

had all the power of persuasion, and even of command. Garrick obeyed as if she had been a tenth muse, and prepared the play with the utmost dispatch. He, in the character of Virginius, Mossop in that of Appius, and Mrs. Cibber in Virginia, deserved the compliment paid to them by the author in his preface. But the great stroke which crowned it with success (which will appear almost incredible) was Garrick's manner of uttering two words. Claudius, the iniquitous tool of the Decemvir, claims Vir-

ginia as a slave born in his house. He pleads his cause before Appius on his tribunal. During that time Garrick, representing Virginius, stood on the opposite side of the scene, next to the stage door, with his arms folded across his breast, his eyes riveted to the ground, like a mute and lifeless statue.

‘ Being told at length that the tyrant is willing to hear him, he continued for some time in the same attitude ; his countenance expressing a variety of passions, and the spectators fixed in ardent gaze. By slow degrees he raised his head ; he paused ; he turned round in the slowest manner, till his eyes fixed on Claudius. He still remained silent, and after looking eagerly at the impostor, he uttered in a low tone of voice, that spoke the fulness of a broken heart, *Thou traitor*. The whole audience was electrified ; they felt the impression, and a thunder of applause testified their delight. Pliny the elder, speaking of certain minerals, says, Nature is never more fully displayed than in the minutest objects. This remark may be applied to the nice touches of such an actor as Garrick.’

By this time the public had grown somewhat tired of tragedies, and Garrick, ever skilful in feeling its pulse, and ever ready to anticipate its wants, produced an opera called ‘ *The Fairies*,’

the libretto of which was taken from 'The Midsummer Night's Dream,' the music being supplied by one Mr. Smith, pupil of the great Handel. The opera introduced to the notice of the town two foreign singers, Signora Passerini and Signor Curioni ; the former of whom alone had some twenty-seven songs to sing in the course of the evening's entertainment. Later in the season, came 'The Tempest,' 'made into an opera' by the ingenious Mr. Garrick, with Beard the ballad singer, who had married Lady Henrietta Herbert, daughter of my Lord Waldegrave, in the character of Prospero. The same ingenious author likewise gave the public a version of 'The Winter Night's Tale,' by chopping and altering it to three acts, and presenting it under the title of 'Florizel and Perdita.'

The liberties which he took with Shakespeare were differently viewed by various critics. Johnson shook his great head, and smiled at Poor Davy's efforts ; but Warburton assured the actor, so far as his alterations of 'The Winter's Tale' went, he had 'given an elegant form to a monstrous composition.' Furthermore, this judicious critic tells Garrick, 'You have, in your own additions, written up the best scenes in the play ; so that you will easily im-

agine I read the reformed " Winter's Tale " with great pleasure. You have greatly improved a fine prologue.'

However, Garrick was not to lay such flattering unction to his soul without a challenge ; for Theophilus Cibber, in a lecture on Shakespeare, declared ' The Midsummer Night's Dream ' ' had been minced and fricassed into a thing called " The Fairies ; " " The Winter's Tale " mammocked into a droll ; and " The Tempest " castrated into an opera.' But Garrick did not much care what his critics thought so long as his house was crowded and his coffers full.

And now, in November, 1755, he resolved to give the town a stronger attraction than it had before witnessed. This was to take the form of a pantomimic performance which would include wonderful dances, and exhibit gimcrack scenery. It was to be called ' The Chinese Festival.' For the purpose of making the entertainment a vast success, Garrick, as early as September, 1754, entered into a correspondence with Monsieur Noverre which finally led to the engagement of that artist. Monsieur Jean Noverre was a Swiss dancer and ballet master who had gained a vast reputation in Paris and the chief Courts of Europe by his capers. The

artist informed the manager he had been invited to the Court of Bavaria, but 'knowing Mr. Garrick to have superior talent, and that his judgment would secure the suffrages of the English nation, his own interest and the delight of that country induced him to give his representations in preference there.'

The honour of his preference was, it may be added, secured by the assurance of three hundred and fifty guineas for the season, together with a benefit; moreover, his sister was to be *seconde danseuse*, at a salary of a hundred guineas. Garrick intended to place the entertainment on his stage in the handsomest manner; and accordingly gave Monsieur Jean Noverre permission to engage dancers in Paris, buy dresses from a fashionable Parisian *costumier*, and order decorations from Monsieur Boyuet, *chef* to the Fêtes de la Cour. So delighted was the dancer by Garrick's liberality that he wrote to him, 'You are a divine man, and all the artists and the learned of this country desire the happiness of your acquaintance.' By October, 1755, Monsieur had graciously transported himself to London, bringing with him upwards of a score of chosen dancers, when he commenced his rehearsals for an exhibition, which it was hoped would take the town by storm.

This hope was certainly fulfilled, but not in the manner anticipated.

Between the periods of Noverre's engagement and his arrival in London, it happened that hostilities had broken out between France and England, and so patriotic did the populace become that the fine old British prejudice was suddenly raised against the harmless dancer and his troupe. Was the bread to be taken out of the mouths of honest English actors by foreign mountebanks, it was asked ; and was English coin to be freely paid at the doors of Drury Lane, to fill the pockets of this frog-eating monsieur and his snail-loving dancers ? The mere idea was shameful. The true Briton would never permit such an enormity. Grub-street scribblers, unengaged actors, authors with dark tragedies in their greasy pockets, — all joined in a hue and cry, which became sufficiently noisy to fill Garrick with serious apprehensions that a riot would be attempted at his theatre on the first production of 'The Chinese Festival.' He therefore appealed to the people through the columns of the 'Public Advertiser' using excuses and arguments, to appease their angry feelings, which seem strange indeed to the eyes of modern readers. The engagement of the obnoxious dancer, he avowed, was entered into twelve months before ; and



‘the insinuation that at this time an extraordinary number of French dancers are engaged is groundless,’ he continues; ‘there being at Drury Lane at present as few of that nation as any other theatre now has, or perhaps ever had. *Mr. Noverre* and his brothers are Swiss, of a Protestant family, in the Canton of Berne; his wife and sisters Germans. There are above sixty performers concerned in the entertainment, more than forty of which are English, assisted only by a few French (five men and four women) to complete the ballet as usual.’

But these explanations did not receive general credence, and the middle and lower classes became daily more enraged. In polite circles, however, foreign modes and manners were highly fashionable; and to avow a taste for the French dancers was in itself considered a mark of distinction from vulgar prejudices. Now Garrick, being wise in his generation, sought to appease all classes, and bethought him of a plan which might reconcile the people to his performers. This was to obtain the patronage and presence of the king on the first night of the representation of ‘*The Chinese Festival* ;’ for surely, if his Majesty countenanced the foreigners, his subjects could no longer protest against them on patriotic grounds. Garrick,

therefore, through the favour of his friend the Duke of Grafton, then Lord Chamberlain, obtained the desired favour; and on the 8th of November, 1755, the king sat in the royal box at Drury Lane playhouse.

The first part of the night's entertainment consisted in the performance of 'The Fair Quaker of Deal,' the low humour and general coarseness of which rendered it, in the nice judgment of his Majesty, one of the finest comedies in the language he vainly attempted to speak. This was immediately followed by 'the new grand entertainment of dancing, called "The Chinese Festival;"' which had no sooner begun than it was received by groans, hisses, and other marks of disapprobation which the royal presence alone prevented from breaking into a riot. The king, somewhat disconcerted, asked the meaning of the uproar, and when informed it was merely an evidence of a patriotic spirit rising in protest against the employment of foreign artists, he laughed heartily, and enjoyed the dancing none the less for the nationality of the performers.

Garrick now saw that 'The Chinese Festival' was not likely to be favourably received by the public, but hoped their resentment might be softened by time; he therefore laid it aside

until the following Wednesday night, when it was again put on the stage. But it met with no better reception than that which had greeted its first production. The pit hissed vigorously, the gallery groaned loudly, and the whole theatre was in a tumult, whilst Monsieur Jean Noverre and his satellites skipped about the stage, pale from apprehension. The manager felt it would be wise and well to withdraw the entertainment, but he was reluctant to do so until he had derived some return for the great outlay which it had cost him. It was therefore repeated for a couple of nights, at the risk of provoking a general riot.

Garrick was in despair; but he was a man of resources, and was not yet beaten. If he could only again secure the presence of royalty at his theatre, it would lend a double sanction to the festival which must render it acceptable to the most prejudiced. Now it happened that the king had never seen the first actor in his kingdom play, though his name had been for fourteen years the theme of every tongue. George II., it will be remembered, was no patron of the arts; indeed, he cherished a hearty contempt in his royal breast for the muses nine. He had rewarded Hogarth with a guinea when the great artist had presented him with his

inimitable picture 'The March to Finchley;' and had severely reproved my Lord Hervey for writing poems, an occupation he considered unworthy a nobleman, and only fit for such as little Mr. Pope. With this lack of taste it is scarcely a matter of wonder that he overlooked the merits of the great actor.

Garrick, therefore, now that the royal presence was likely to be of some service to him, reminded the Duke of Grafton of the neglect he laboured under in never having played before the king. His Grace promised to remedy the grievance; and accordingly it was arranged that his Majesty should see Garrick act in 'Richard the Third,' after which the wily manager resolved to gladden the royal sight by a second representation of 'The Chinese Festival.' What his gracious Majesty's first impressions were of the great actor's performance is best told by Arthur Murphy, who was present when Mr. Fitzherbert, one of the attendants in the royal box during the king's visit, came behind the scenes when the play was over, and the sovereign had gone home.

'Garrick was impatient to know what his Majesty thought of "Richard the Third,"' writes Murphy. "'I can say nothing on that head," replied Mr. Fitzherbert; "but when an actor

told Richard 'The Lord Mayor of London comes to greet you,' the king roused himself; and when Taswell entered buffooning the character, the king exclaimed, 'Duke of Grafton, I like that Lord Mayor;' and when the scene was over, he said again, 'Duke of Grafton, that is good Lord Mayor.'"

"Well, but the warlike bustle, the drums and trumpets, and the shouts of soldiers must have awakened a great military genius."

"I can say nothing of that," replied Mr. Fitzherbert; "but when Richard was in Bosworth Field, roaring for a horse, his Majesty said, 'Duke of Grafton, will that Lord Mayor not come again?'"

After the royal visit Garrick put 'The Chinese Festival' on the stage for a few nights; but on each occasion the pit and gallery received it with groans and hisses, much to the disgust of the fashionable world assembled in the boxes, who heartily applauded Monsieur Jean Noverre and his troupe. At last the long threatened storm burst on the house, on the 18th of November, and great was the tumult thereof. On this occasion a most brilliant and fashionable audience had assembled to witness the performance of 'The Earl of Essex,' and afterwards divert themselves with the spectacle of the

French dancers. But when the curtain rose on the entertainment in which they appeared, the hissing and groaning were louder than ever. This was, of course, most objectionable to the polite assembly present, and some young men of quality jumped up, drew their swords, and swore they would stand it no longer.

On this the ladies undertook to point out the ringleaders of the disturbance, and the young gentlemen at once leaped down into the pit to drive the unmannerly fellows out of doors. But the pit likewise drew its sabre, and each side being about equal in numbers, a drawn battle ensued. Swords flashed and clashed, wigs were flung in the air, oaths were uttered, blood was spilt, women screamed and were conducted out of doors. The gallery, meanwhile, rushed to the rescue of the pit, and both combining against a common enemy, they were soon victorious. But now, rendered furious, they resolved to avenge themselves on Garrick. They therefore tore up the benches, smashed the chandeliers, and rushing on the stage, cut the gimcrack Chinese scenery to pieces. The French dancers fled from the theatre with all possible speed, and Garrick betook himself in hot haste to his house in Southampton Street, whither the mob duly followed him and broke his windows.

‘The Chinese Festival’ was therefore finally withdrawn, and its place in due time supplied by a pantomime called ‘Fortunatus;’ all the players in which being thoroughly British, it was received with great favour by the town.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Peg Woffington's Last Years at Covent Garden. — Her Famous Characters. — The Comedy of 'The Careless Husband.' — Introduction of a Scene from Real Life. — Its Sparkling Dialogue. — Its Plot and Characters. — Peg Woffington as Lady Betty Modish. — Opinion of an Anonymous Critic. — Her Last Night. — Cibber, Quin, Barry, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, and Lady Coventry. — The Curtain Descends upon the Woffington's Life.

FROM 1754 to 1757, Peg Woffington continued to delight the town by her sprightly acting in a round of famous comedies. The excellent plays of the last century being wholly unaided by the stage carpenter's tricks or the upholsterer's embellishments, solely depended on the abilities of the players for success. Remembering this, it is a high tribute to record that no drama in which the actress performed lacked success. As Lady Townley in 'The Provoked Husband;' as Mrs. Sullen in 'The Beaux's Stratagem;' as Angelina in 'Love Makes a Man;' as Lady Betty Modish in 'The Careless Husband,'—she was pronounced inimitable. Her dignified air, her exquisite grace, her



tone of refinement in the personation of ladies of quality and pleasure had never been equalled.

Perhaps of all her representations of women of fashion, she excelled as Lady Betty Modish in Colley Cibber's famous comedy. The interest of the play depends not so much on the plot as on the dialogue, which abounds in an easy turn of thought and expression, and a readiness of wit and repartee ever productive of delight to the intelligent audiences of the past century. It was, indeed, affirmed that the comedy contained 'the most elegant dialogue, and the most perfect knowledge of the manners of persons in real high life extant in any dramatic piece which has yet appeared in any language whatever.' Moreover, we learn that 'the excellent moral, together with the happy choice of characters, the natural and genteel diction, and the spirit of gaiety which pervades the whole rendered it an acknowledged favourite.'

Perhaps a fact which gave it additional interest in the eyes of the public, was that Colley Cibber submitted every scene of it to the revision and correction of the famous Lady Macclesfield; of whose taste and judgment as to genteel life and manners he had the highest opinion. Moreover, a scene which happened in this lady's house was, by her permission, in-

troduced into the comedy, by way of imparting to it a more piquant flavour.

It will be remembered my Lady Macclesfield announced that her son, afterwards known as Richard Savage, was the offspring of Earl Rivers ; whereon her lord sought and obtained a divorce, in consequence of which Lady Macclesfield resumed her maiden name, and was known as Miss Mason. But not for long. Being a lady of pleasure, and moreover, remarkable for her beauty, she wedded Colonel Brett, whose physical excellencies and moral worth equalled her own.<sup>1</sup> The one was in every way a complement of the other. A little while after their nuptials the colonel was reported to be free in his gallantries with his lady's maid ; a fact Mrs. Brett suspected. But her conjectures were soon changed into conviction ; for entering her room one day, she found the gallant colonel and her maid both fast asleep in two chairs. Her philosophy, like her virtue, may be described as easy. She did not for a moment think of disturbing her spouse from his comfortable nap ; but she tied her handkerchief round his neck, by way of intimating she had discovered his intrigue, of which, however, she

<sup>1</sup> See 'Court Life Below Stairs,' vol. i., p. 293., ed. 1882.

otherwise took no notice. This was the domestic scene which she gave Colley Cibber permission to introduce into his comedy for the better diversion of the town.

To give a picture of the manners 'of persons in real high life,' the morality depicted was, as in duty bound, remarkable for its freedoms, yet free from vulgar coarseness; an advantage seldom to be found in the plays of the time. 'The best critics,' says Colley Cibber in his preface, 'have long and justly complained that the coarseness of most characters in our late comedies have been unfit entertainments for people of quality, especially the ladies; and therefore I was long in hopes that some able pen (whose expectation did not hang upon the profits of success) would generously attempt to reform the town into a better taste than the world generally allows them. But nothing of that kind having lately appeared that would give me an opportunity of being wise at another's expense, I found it impossible any longer to resist the secret temptation of my vanity; and so even struck the first blow myself. The event has now convinced me that whoever sticks closely to Nature, can't easily write above the understanding of the galleries, though at the same time he may possibly deserve applause of the boxes.'

The scene of this excellent comedy is laid at Windsor, and its seven characters play parts almost equal in importance. These are Sir Charles Easy, his lady, and her maid Mrs. Edging, Lady Graveairs who loves Sir Charles, and Lady Betty Modish with whom Lord Morelove and Lord Foppington are in love ; the former with the intention of proposing an honourable marriage, the latter with the idea of carrying on a fashionable intrigue.

Sir Charles, a character modelled on Colonel Brett, is a gay soul and a gallant ; yet a man who never seemed other than he was, even in his vices, one too in whom, notwithstanding the lightness of his morals, there still shone forth an undesigning honesty, too often absent in smoother faces. In the services of most women, save his wife (a virtuous, discreet, and suffering lady), he was a slave.

‘ How like children do we judge of happiness,’ says he. ‘ When I was stinted in my fortune almost everything was a pleasure to me ; because most things then being out of my reach I had always the pleasure of hoping for them. Now Fortune ’s in my hand, she ’s as insipid as an old acquaintance. It ’s mighty silly, faith, just the same thing by my wife too. I am told she ’s exceedingly handsome ;

nay, and have heard a great many people say, she is certainly the best woman in the world. Why, I don't know but she may be, yet I could never find that her person or good qualities gave me any concern. In my eye, the woman has no more charms than my mother.'

As he philosophises in this manner, my lady's maid Mrs. Edging, enters the room, with a pretty, pert air. 'What's the matter; child?' says he; and adds, 'kiss me, hussy.' The hussy prays the deuce may fetch her, if she does; 'and if you have anything to say to me again, I'll be burned,' says she. 'Some one has bely'd me to thee,' remarks Sir Charles. Whereon she tells him she has discovered a letter written to him by my Lady Graveairs, when she went to fetch his snuff-box out of his waistcoat pocket. At the very thought of it her blood rose; she could tear her ladyship to pieces. She would not stay in a family to be used at this rate for, says she, quite saucy to Sir Charles, 'I'd have you know I have refused lords and dukes for your sake, and that I have had as many blue and green ribbons after me, for ought I know, as would have made me a silken apron.'

Hearing all this, Sir Charles promised to twist her pretty white neck if she ever dares to read a letter of his again; and the maid van-

ishes at the footsteps of her mistress. Poor Lady Easy is a woman of much wisdom and patience, by reason of which she, though aware of her husband's deplorable faults, refrains from upbraiding him with her wrongs, as such would be but taking on herself a mean redress; neither does she bid defiance to his falsehood which would but naturally provoke him to undo her. 'The uneasy thought of my continual jealousy may tease him to a fixed aversion,' she wisely argues; 'and hitherto, though he neglects, I cannot think he hates me.' She therefore resolves that her eyes and tongue shall be blind and silent to her wrongs until by some gross, apparent proof of his misdoing, he forces her to see — and forgive it.

As she enters, Sir Charles is filled with kindness for her, mixed with reproach for himself. He hopes the air of Windsor agrees with her, and asks what kind of company would most please her. 'When business would permit it, yours,' she makes answer; 'and in your absence, a sincere friend that were truly happy in an honest husband to sit a cheerful hour, and talk in mutual praise of our condition.' Then follows a dialogue, charmingly illustrative of the morals of the day.

'Are you, then, really very happy, my dear?'

asks Sir Charles. She wonders why he should question it. 'Because,' says he, 'I fancy I am not as good to you as I should be. Nay, the deuce take me, if I don't really confess myself so bad that I have often wondered how any woman of your sense, rank, and person, could think it worth her while to have so many useless good qualities.'

'I can't boast of my good qualities,' says Lady Easy, 'nor if I could, do I believe you would think 'em useless.'

'Nay,' asks her spouse, 'do you perceive that I am one tittle the better husband for your being so good a wife? Tell me truly, was you never jealous of me?'

'Did I ever give you a sign of it?' asks the poor lady.

'Um — that 's true,' replies Sir Charles. 'But do you really think I never gave you occasion?'

'That 's an odd question,' says my lady, evasively. 'But suppose you had?'

'Why, then, what good has your virtue done you, since all the good qualities of it could not keep me to yourself?'

'What occasion have you given me to suppose I have not kept you to myself?' asks Lady Easy; whereon Sir Charles finds himself pushed into a corner.

‘I given you occasion!’ replies he, in some confusion. ‘Fy! my dear — you may be sure — I — look you, that is not the thing; but still a (death, what a blunder I have made) — a still — I say, Madam, you sha’n’t make me believe you have never been jealous of me, nor that you ever had any real cause. But I know women of your principles have more pride than those that have no principles at all; and where there is pride, there must be some jealousy, so that if you are jealous, my dear, you know you wrong me, and —’

‘Why, then,’ replies she, with great truth, ‘upon my word, my dear, I don’t know that I ever wronged you that way in my life.’

‘But suppose,’ Sir Charles persists, ‘I had given you a real cause to be jealous, how would you do then? Suppose now, I were well with a woman of your own acquaintance that under pretence of frequent visits to you, should only come to carry on an affair with me, — suppose now, my Lady Graveairs and I were great, and so very familiar that not only yourself, but half the town, shall see it?’

She tells him that in such a case, she would cry herself sick in some dark closet, and forget her tears when he spoke kindly to her. And then she asks him if he believed she ever had



any ill thoughts of my Lady Graveairs. This shocks Sir Charles.

‘Oh, fy! child,’ says the arrant schemer. ‘Only, you know, she and I used to be a little free sometimes; so I had a mind to see if you thought there was any harm in it. But since I find you very easy, I think myself obliged to tell you that, upon my soul, my dear, I have so little regard to her person that the deuce take me if I would not as soon have an affair with thy own woman.’

Lady Easy says, drily enough, she would as soon suspect him with one as with the other; on which Sir Charles asks her for a kiss, and declares he wishes he may die, if he does not think her a very fine woman.

As she is, at the conclusion of this conversation, going forth to church, a servant enters to tell Sir Charles my Lord Morelove is at the chocolate house, but will wait upon him presently. Hearing this Lady Easy, knowing he has been drawn to Windsor by Lady Betty Modish with whom he is desperately in love, bids Sir Charles ask him to dinner; a hospitality she will likewise offer Lady Betty, at whose lodgings she will call.

When my Lord Morelove enters, he is charged by Sir Charles with following Lady Betty, ‘and

to make you easy,' says he, ' I cannot see why a man that can ride fifty miles after a poor stag, should be ashamed of running twenty in chase of a fine woman that in all probability will make him so much the better sport ; ' at which speech my lord embraces him.

Lady Betty Modish, a character the Woffington delighted to personate, though secretly in love with Morelove, professes indifference to him, she being a coquette of the first water, and a woman much given to mischief. So she encourages my Lord Foppington, — a married man but a rare gallant, — and likewise a friend of his, young Startup, a pert coxcomb just come to a small estate and a great periwig, who may be seen with a cane dangling at his button, his breast open, his hands ungloved, and with one eye tucked under his hat, — in fact, the most prodigious fop imaginable, who flings himself among the women, and won't speak to a commoner when a lord is in company.

Now Lady Betty, the better to hide her affection for Lord Morelove, not only encouraged such coxcombs, but treated her lover shamefully. To piece up a quarrel, she would appoint him to visit her alone, and though she had promised to see no other company the whole day, when he went he was sure to find her

among the laughter of noisy fops, coquettes, and coxcombs, dissolutely gay, her eyes brilliant with transport at their flattery, and vanity at her own powers of pleasing. Then, when she had thrown away four hours of good humour upon such a worthless lot, the moment they were gone she grew dull to him, sank into a distasteful spleen, complained she had talked herself into a headache, and indulged in the dear delight of seeing him in pain; and by the time she had stretched and gaped him heartily out of patience, she of a sudden remembered she had outsat her appointment with my Lady Fiddle-faddle, and immediately ordered her coach to the Park.

It happened they had just had one of their pretty quarrels when my lord called on his friend. In disputing with her upon the conduct of women, he had taken the liberty of telling her how far he thought she erred in hers. She told him he was rude, and that she could never believe any man could love a woman that thought her in the wrong in anything she had a mind to, — at least, if he had a mind to tell her so. This provoked him into her whole character, with as much spite and civil malice as he had seen her bestow upon a woman of true beauty, when the men first toasted her; in the middle of which

she told him she desired to be alone, and that he might take his odious, proud heart along with him. On this he bowed low, vowed he or his proud heart would never be humbled by the finest woman, and left her. An hour later he whipped into his coach for London ; but by the time he got to Hounslow, he found her so much in the right that he cursed his pride for contradicting her at all, and became convinced that no woman could be in the wrong to a man that she had in her power. He therefore turned the horses' heads and drove back to Windsor.

Having unburdened himself to Sir Charles, they both plot to pique the proud beauty into showing concern for her ardent lover by provoking her jealousy. At this point a lackey comes from my Lord Foppington, to present his lordship's compliments to Sir Charles, and say, if his honour is at leisure, he will wait on him when he is dressed. Sir Charles, in return, sends him back his services, and hopes his lordship will do him the honour of dining with him that day.

'We may have occasion for him in our design upon Lady Betty,' says Sir Charles ; 'and if you have a mind to be let into the mystery of making love without pain, here's one that's master of the art.'

‘Pr’ythee, what sense of love has he?’ asks my lord, with some disdain.

‘Faith,’ answers Sir Charles, ‘very near as much as a man of sense ought to have. I grant you, he knows not how to value a woman truly deserving; but he has a pretty just esteem for most ladies about town.’

In the second act, Lady Easy and Lady Betty hold critical converse over a new scarf belonging to the latter, which was pronounced ‘all extravagance, both in mode and fancy,’ and was ‘so new, so lively, so noble, so coquet that ’t was most charming;’ Lady Easy declares herself half angry to see a woman of sense concerned so much about her outside, ‘for when we have taken our best pains about it, ’t is the beauty of the mind alone that gives us lasting value,’ says she.

On hearing this speech, my Lady Betty Modish is amazingly diverted.

‘Oh, my dear, my dear,’ says her friend, ‘you have been a married woman to a fine purpose indeed, that know so little of the taste of mankind. Take my word, a new fashion upon a fine woman is often a greater proof of her value than you are aware of.’

This my Lady Easy cannot comprehend, when her friend tells her she cannot see a woman of

spirit has any business but to dress and make the men like her. Apropos of which, Lady Easy pleads for Morelove, a man of worth and sense. At which Lady Betty laughs. Being a woman of much experience, she gives it as her opinion that men of sense make the best fools in the world; for their sincerity and good-breeding threw them so entirely into a woman's power, and gave her such an agreeable thirst for using them ill, to show her authority, that it was impossible to quench it. There was ten thousand times more trouble with a coxcomb.

'But, methinks, my Lord Morelove's manner to you might move any woman to a sense of his merit,' pleads Lady Easy.

'Ah,' answers proud Lady Betty, 'but would it not be hard, my dear, for a poor weak woman to have a man of his quality and reputation in her power, and not let the world see him there? Would any creature sit new-dressed all day in her closet? Could you bear to have a sweet fancied suit, and never show it at the play, or the drawing-room?'

Lady Easy suggests it might, without care, be worn out; but her friend cries pooh! and says my Lord Morelove's a mere Indian damask, not to be worn out. 'Upon my conscience, I must give him to my woman at last,' says she.

‘ I begin to be known by him ; had I not best leave him off, my dear ? ’

‘ If you found you did not like him at first, why did you encourage him ? ’ asks Lady Easy.

But my Lady Betty has a ready answer. ‘ Why, what would you have one do ? ’ says she. ‘ I could no more chuse a man by my eye than a shoe ; one must draw ’em on a little, to see if they are right to one’s foot.’

Lady Easy declares she would no more play the fool with a man she could not love, than wear a shoe that pinched her.

‘ Ah,’ replies her friend, archly, ‘ but then the poor wretch tells one he ’ll widen ’em, or do anything ; and is so civil and silly that one does not know how to return such a trifle as a pair of shoes, or a heart, upon a fellow’s hands again.’

At this Lady Easy is wrathful, and wonders how she could bear to see a coxcomb like Lord Foppington draw up his breath, stare her full in the face, and cry, ‘ gad, you’re handsome ! ’

‘ My dear,’ says Lady Betty, with that fine sense of the world’s ways which distinguished her utterances, ‘ fine fruit will have flies about it, but, poor things, they do no harm ; for, if you observe, people are generally most apt to chuse that the flies have been busy with.’



Margaret Woffington  
Saturday X. 18. 1747.





The ladies having given their opinions of mankind, mankind, in the persons of Sir Charles, Morelove, and Foppington, give theirs of womankind in a manner which may be described as free. As the two former converse, the latter enters. They both greet him heartily.

‘My dear Lord Foppington,’ says Sir Charles.

‘My lord, I kiss your hands,’ says Morelove.

‘You look extremely well.’

His lordship declares that to see his friends look so, may easily give a *vermeile* to his complexion. Then they ask him what business has brought him to Windsor.

‘Why, then, *entre nous*,’ replies this airy coxcomb, ‘there is a certain *fille-de-joye* about the court here that loves winning at cards better than all the fine things I have been able to say to her; so I have brought an odd thousand bill in my pocket that I design, *tête-à-tête*, to play off with her at piquet.’

Morelove replies that she must be a woman of consequence by the value he sets upon her favours; whilst Sir Charles declares nothing’s above the price of a fine woman.

‘Nay, look you, gentlemen,’ says Foppington, ‘the price may not happen to be altogether so high neither; for I fancy I know enough of the game to make it but an even bet I get her for

nothing. For if she happen to lose a good sum to me, I shall buy her with her own money.'

Lord Morelove confessed this was new.

'You know,' Foppington explained, 't is not impossible but I may be five hundred pounds deep with her; then bills may fall short, and the devil's in 't if I want assurance to ask her to pay me some way or other.'

'And a man,' says the gallant Sir Charles, 'must be a churl indeed that won't take a lady's personal security.'

Whereon they three laugh right merrily.

The conversation continuing on the same interesting theme, Foppington brags that he would no more give up his heart to a woman than his sword to a bully; for they were both as insolent as the devil after it. Apropos to which Sir Charles reminds him his chief business then at Windsor was to surrender his heart to a woman of fashion; but he protests he merely desired the reputation of an affair with her, that being the most inviting part of an intrigue.

'But how can you that profess indifference, says Lord Morelove, 'think it worth your while to come so often up to the price of a woman of quality?'

'Because you must know,' replies the fop, 'that most of them begin now to come down

to reason, at least with the wiser sort 't is not of late so very expensive,—now and then a *partie quarrie*, a jaunt or two in a hack to an Indian house, a little china, an odd thing for a gown or so; and in three days after you may meet her at the conveniency of trying it *chez Mademoiselle d'Epingle*.'

'Ay, ay, my lord,' chimes in Sir Charles; 'and when you are there, you know, what between a little chat, a dish of tea, Mademoiselle's good-humour, and a *petit chanson* or two, the devil's in 't if a man can't fool away the time till he sees how it looks upon her by candle-light.'

Then they away to dinner, and my Lady Betty Modish, who assumes an insolence that might furnish out a thousand devils, flirts desperately with Foppington, until Morelove is almost distracted. In this mood she says a thousand spiteful things to torture his heart, and is in such high humour that she laughs affection and constancy to scorn, if you please.

'Sincerity in love,' says she, 'is as much out of fashion as sweet-stuff; nobody takes it now.'

'Oh, no mortal, Madam,' replies Foppington, 'unless it be here and there a squire that's making his lawful court to the cherry-cheeked

charms of my lord bishop's great, fat daughter in the country.'

At this Lady Betty laughs, and declares he is a most provoking creature, and throws her hand carelessly on his, encouraged by which he ventures to make another joke at the expense of the time-honoured custom of marriage.

'It is, indeed,' says he, 'a prodigious security to one's inclinations. A man's likely to take a world of pains in an employment where he can't be turned out for his idleness.'

Her ladyship laughs again, and then ventures a sneer at reputation.

'Indeed,' she remarks, 'that jewel is a very fanciful business. One shall not see a homely creature in town, but wears it in her mouth as monstrously as the Indians do bobs at their lips; and it really becomes them just alike.'

She in her turn is wrought to fury by Morelove flirting with my Lady Graveairs, whose person and condition seem cut out for the ease of a lover; inasmuch as she was young and handsome, wild, and a widow. Moreover, her vexation is increased by her lover's speeches. He confesses to Foppington that he has the worst judgment in the world for a woman, for no man had been more deceived.

'Then,' says Foppington, 'your lordship, I

presume, has been apt to chuse in a mask, or by candle-light ?'

'In a mask, indeed, my lord,' he replies ;  
'and of all masks the most dangerous.'

'Pray, what may that be ?' inquires Lord Foppington.

'A bare face.'

'Your lordship will pardon me,' says Foppington, 'if I don't so readily comprehend how a woman's bare face can hide her face.'

'It often hides her heart,' says Morelove ;  
'and therefore I sometimes think it a more dangerous mask than a piece of velvet ; that's rather a mark than a disguise of an ill woman. But the mischiefs skulking behind a beauteous form give no warning ; they are always sure, fatal, and innumerable.'

'Oh, barbarous aspersión,' cries Lady Betty.  
'My Lord Foppington, have you nothing to say for the poor women ?'

His lordship has : 'I must confess, Madam,' says he, 'nothing of this nature happened in my course of amours. I always judge the beauteous form of a woman to be the most agreeable part of her composition ; and when once a lady does me the honour to toss that into my arms, I think myself obliged in good-nature not to quarrel about the rest of her equipage.'

Next comes the scene where Lady Easy discovers Sir Charles, without his periwig, and Edging both asleep in two easy-chairs, upon which the poor lady trembles and starts, breaks into blank verse, and calls on virtue, patience, and reason to protect her. Then her eyes falling on Sir Charles's head (bare of its periwig), she lays her handkerchief upon it, lest in the unwholesome air some languishing distemper might overtake him. When he awakes and finds he has been discovered, he grows suddenly conscience-stricken, and makes vows of future constancy to his lady, — whose virtues are now most plain to his sight. Then they both unite in bringing Lady Betty and Morelove together ; a fact that is accomplished without much trouble. The proud flirt, who fancies Lord Morelove's affection has turned away from her, owns she has been wrong and that she used Foppington but as the tool of her resentment. 'Send for him,' says she, 'and you shall be witness of the contempt and detestation I have for any forward hopes his vanity may have given him.'

'Oh, let my soul,' says poor Morelove, 'thus bending to your power, adore this soft, descending goodness,' and he kisses her hand and makes her a thousand pretty speeches. This reconcili-



WOFFINGTON AS MRS. FORD.





ation does not much discomfort Foppington's peace of mind. 'Look you, Charles,' he says, to Morelove, 't is true, I did deign to have played with her alone, but he that will keep well with the ladies must be content to humour them in their whims.' Then when Lady Betty asks his pardon for the liberties she has taken with him, he replies, good-humouredly, 'Oh, Madam, don't be under the confusion of an apology on my account ; for in cases of this nature I am never disappointed but when I find a lady of the same mind two hours together. Madam, I have lost a thousand fine women in my time, but never had the ill-manners to be out of humour with any one, for refusing me, since I was born.'

All things being happily arranged, a song is sung, Sir Charles utters a moral sentiment, and the curtain drops.

Such was the comedy of 'The Careless Husband,' which afforded such infinite pleasure to the playgoers of the last century. As Lady Betty Modish, Peg Woffington's acting was a perfect and beautiful study of which the public never tired. The grace and variety of her movements, nay, even her merest gesture, — the saucy turn of her head, the impatient tapping of her foot upon the floor, the opening and shutting of

her fan, the bend of her shapely body, — afforded not only a sensuous, but an intellectual delight.

In the season of 1756–57, we find her playing Helena in ‘The Rover;’ the Frenchified Lady in the tragedy of ‘Theodosius;’ Mrs. Ford in ‘The Merry Wives of Windsor;’ the Queen in ‘Hamlet;’ and Charlotte in ‘The Refusal.’ In each of these she won applause. An anonymous contemporary critic, speaking of her, says, ‘She first steals your heart, and then laughs at you, as secure of your applause. There is such a prepossession arises from her form; such a witchcraft in her beauty; and to those who are personally acquainted with her, such an absolute command from the sweetness of her disposition, — that it is almost impossible to criticise upon her.’

Then Hitchcock testifies to her bearing in private life. ‘To her honour be it ever remembered,’ says he, ‘that whilst in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees, it made no alteration in her behaviour; she remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to every one around her.’ And again he bears witness to her willingness to help others. ‘Not the lowest performer in the theatre did she refuse playing

for. Out of twenty-six benefits in one season, she acted in twenty-four. Such traits of character,' he adds, 'must endear the memory of Mrs. Woffington to every lover of the drama.'

It was noted that during the season of 1756-57, her appearance was not so regular as in days of yore; for now her health began to give way, and there were nights and weeks when illness kept her absent from the brilliant scenes which had ever been her delight. This indisposition was not, however, regarded by her as in any way serious, but rather as the result of over-work and fatigue, which rest would no doubt speedily remedy. But this was the last season in which she was destined to play. Nor did she take farewell of a public which long ago had enshrined this beautiful and gifted woman as their favourite; though a large section of those to whom her acting had for years afforded delight, were present when the awful summons came that heralded her death.

On the night of the 17th of May, 1757, she appeared as Rosalind, for the benefit of two minor actors and a French dancer. The boxes were brilliant with the beauty of fair women; the pit, brave in its numbers of coffee-house critics, elegant diletanti, and men about town; the galleries, crowded and attentive, — for her

Rosalind invariably drew the town. For the first four acts of the play all went smoothly, though it was evident to those behind the scenes that Peg Woffington was unwell. During the fifth act, she complained of serious indisposition ; her dark eyes wore the haggard look which comes of pain ; her cheeks were blanched under the rouge, and the smiles on her lips were for once the result of effort. Tate Wilkinson, who stood at the wings, offered her his arm as she came off the stage in one of the earlier scenes. She accepted the courtesy graciously, remembering the hard words she had once spoken to him in her passion. Her manner was now full of that grace and gentleness which had never failed to secure the good-will of those around her.

When, in the last scene, she again came off to change her dress, she once more spoke of being seriously ill ; but in due time went on the stage to finish her part, and succeeded so far that she reached the lines in the epilogue, ‘ If I were among you, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me,’ then faltered ; but after a moment’s hesitation, went bravely on again, ‘ and breaths that I — ’ Here her voice faltered ; she clasped her hands to her side, cried out in a voice of

pain and terror, 'O God! O God!' tottered to the wings, and would have fallen but that she was caught.

'The audience,' says Tate Wilkinson, 'sank into awful looks of astonishment to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about thirty-nine.'

She lived, however, for almost three years after that terrible night, though the playhouse knew her no more. The seeds of an internal complaint which had long lain in her constitution now sprang up, and rapidly increased in growth. She was no longer the bright, beautiful woman the town had worshipped, and she wisely refrained from challenging comparisons with her past. She had long ago declared she would never destroy her reputation by clinging to the shadow when the substance had gone. 'When,' said she, 'I can no longer bound on the boards with elastic step, and when the enthusiasm of the public begins to show symptoms of change, that night will be the last appearance of Margaret Woffington.' She now kept her word. Residing quietly at Teddington, her

days were chiefly spent in exercises of kindness and charity to the poor surrounding her.

‘After her retirement,’ says John Galt, ‘her conduct is spoken of by all who have expressed an opinion of her as something like a phenomenon. It was simple, graceful, and pious. It partook of all that was blameless in her previous life.’

During these three last years, in which she walked in the valley of the shadow of death, many of those famous in her brief day were likewise missing from the busy throng of London life. Old Colley Cibber, powdered, painted, and patched, airy, elegant, graceful, and gay to the last, quitted the world’s stage a few months after the Woffington left that of Covent Garden ; his exit, moreover, was almost as sudden. As early as six o’clock one December morning, in the year 1757, he held pleasant converse with his man-servant, being full of gaiety and good-humour. When the valet returned, he found his master sleeping with a smile upon his face. He awoke no more. Burly James Quin had long since retired to Bath, indignant, it was said, at Barry’s success. The public missed him, but not to the extent he imagined ; and he therefore regretted his departure from the boards, and became anxious to return.

By way of hinting the possibility of such an occurrence to Rich, he wrote to the manager a note remarkable for its brevity.

‘I am at Bath. — Quin.’

To this an answer equally laconic, came back.

‘Stay there, and be damned. — Rich.’

He did stay there; for never again did he accept an engagement, but he would journey up to town occasionally to play for the benefit of an old friend at one of the big houses.

It was on one of these occasions that he quarrelled with Foote, who remained as witty and merry as ever. They subsequently made up their dispute, but not without a protest from Foote. ‘Jemmy,’ said he, ‘you should not have said that I had but one shirt, and that I lay a-bed while it was washed.’ ‘Sammy,’ he replied, ‘I never *could* have said so; for I never knew you had a shirt to wash.’ At Bath he grew old with grace, — loving his bottle, his dinner, and his jest as much as in days of yore. But though he played Falstaff in real life, he would, in the last years of his existence, play the part no more upon the stage, not even to oblige his old friend Ryan. ‘I would play for you, if I could,’ he wrote him, ‘but I will not whistle Falstaff for any man. I have willed you one thousand pounds. If you want money,



you may have it, and save my executors trouble.'

And so the merry old soul betook his way down the hill of life with a joke on his lips for all he encountered by the way. One day, a young jackanapes, who was rushing up the hill as fast as the old actor was descending it, said to him, with the thoughtlessness of youth, 'What would you give to be as young as I am?' 'In truth, sir, I would submit to be almost as foolish,' said the old fellow; and he went his way, reaching the valley of eternal shadows a little later than Peg Woffington.

Charles Macklin had gone over to Ireland with Barry and Woodward, who had built a new theatre in Crow Street, Dublin, which nearly ruined them; and Theophilus Cibber, in attempting to reach the same country, went down to the bottom of the sea, in company with Maddox the wire dancer, and troubled his wife nor the world no more. Then Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, with whom the Woffington's name was once closely associated, had died by his own hand. He had been sent out to Russia in the character of an English ambassador, and had returned deplorably demented. 'Poor Sir Charles Williams is returned from Russia,' writes Horace Walpole; who adds



MRS. DELANY.



a line or two of scandal, quite in a friendly way. 'This is imputed to a lady at Hamburgh, who gave him, and from whom he took, some assistance to his passion. But we hope he will soon recover.'

And now, alas! my Lady Coventry lay sick unto death of a consumption. 'What a wretched end Lady Coventry makes after her short-lived reign of beauty,' writes Mrs. Delany, a prudent lady and a severe. 'Not content with the extraordinary share Providence had bestowed on her, she presumptuously and vainly thought to mend it; and by that means, they say, has destroyed her life, for Dr. Taylor says the white she made use of for her face and neck was rank poison. I wish it may be a warning to her imitators.'

With a reluctance amounting almost to terror, the poor, vain, pleasure-loving countess beheld death approaching her whilst she was yet in the very morning of her vivacious, butterfly life. For weeks she lay in bed, with the blinds of her chamber drawn, so that no light was admitted save what came from the lamp of a tea-kettle, in order that the sad ravages which illness had made in her beauty might not be perceptible. One morning it happened that a letter came, directed to my lord, in the hand-

writing of Duchess Hamilton, her sister. Lady Coventry broke the seal, and read her fate in the letter. It lamented her as one on the brink of the grave, whom her sister might never see again. It nearly killed her. 'I was called to her, and found her almost fainting and dying away,' writes Dr. Wall to George Selwyn, who loved the countess well. 'However, she soon after recovered, and I took my leave; but after I was gone the same scene was several times renewed. Her attendants thought her expiring.' During the last weeks of her life, she would permit no one to see her; taking her medicines and cordials, poor soul, in through the curtains of her bed, which she would not suffer to be drawn.

At the same time, Peg Woffington, who had been scarcely less beautiful, or less sought after, lay dying, attended by her sister, — the child whom she had rocked in the garret in George's Court, the young lady whom she had married to a scion of the nobility. To her she willed the sum of five thousand pounds, which she had amassed, together with her valuable jewellery. To her mother she had long allowed thirty pounds a year. O'Keeffe remembered seeing this 'respectable-looking old lady, in her short, black-velvet cloak, with deep, rich fringe,

a diamond ring, and a small agate snuff-box, going the rounds of the Catholic chapels and visiting her neighbours.'

Now that the Woffington lay dying, she remembered there was one person with whom she was not at peace. This was the beautiful and brazen Bellamy, with whom she had once had a green-room squabble regarding the colour of a gown, of which George Anne makes much in her 'Memoirs.' The quarrel was truly feminine in its beginning and its continuation, they refusing to exchange a word with each other for months. Now, however, the Woffington besought Miss Bellamy to come to her, and entreated that they might be reconciled, when accordingly words of peace were exchanged between them. This was one of the last acts of her life. She died on the 28th of March, 1760. Her remains were laid in a vault beneath Teddington Church; in which a tablet records the following inscription:—

'Near this monument lies the body of Margaret Woffington, spinster, born Oct. 18th, 1720, who departed this life March 28th, 1760, aged 39 years.'

Her life had not been blameless. Endowed with the finer susceptibilities attendant on genius, which are at once the pleasure and peril of that heaven-sent gift, suddenly lifted to a leading

position in the theatrical world, surrounded by the most brilliant and fashionable society of the period, sought after for her wit, lauded for her beauty, loved for her worth, she had been led by temptation from the strict, straight path. But her heart had been loyal to her friends, generous to the poor, sympathetic to the afflicted, and in her last years she had sorrowed and suffered.

What hand shall now cast a stone upon her grave?

THE END.







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